

# Snakes

Great care must be taken with snakes due to the inherent dangers involved with handling snakes. A professional must always be called in to assist and it would be wise to call on your local snake park or zoo to assist when having to deal with snakes.

## Control

The easiest way to deal with snakes is to use glue boards we normally use for rodents. These are placed on the trails of the snakes; the snake will be caught up in the glue board and will coil itself up around the board. Great care must be taken to remove the snake from the glue board as it is not our purpose to eliminate snakes.

## The Puff Adder



The puff adder is a large, sluggish, thick-bodied snake that rarely exceeds a meter in length.

Its colour can vary from dull grey with barely discernible markings through to light brown with yellow and white chevron markings. The head is large, flattened, and triangular in shape, has large nostrils pointing vertically upwards and is covered with small, keeled, overlapping scales. It has one of the fastest strikes in the world of around 7 metres per second.

## The Cobra



The cobra is found in most parts of Africa. On average, it will be 1.5 meters in length, its maximum being 2.5. Its habitat is cultivated farmlands, open fields and dry countryside. It is often seen around homes searching for rodents.

The cobra's most recognizable feature is its hood, a flap of skin and muscle behind the head which it can flare using elongated ribs, perhaps for the purpose of making it appear bigger and more threatening to predators. Cobras come in varying colours from black or dark brown to yellowish white.

The venom of cobras is highly neurotoxic and dangerous. Therefore, any cobra bite must be regarded as life-threatening.

## Black Mamba



Mambas are fast-moving tree-dwelling snakes which are related to cobras as can be seen during their threat display, when they stretch a slightly smaller 'hood' while gaping their mouth.

The Black Mamba is the most deadly snake in the world. They grow 4.2 m in length, and can apparently travel at speeds of up to 19.3 kph. (The highest speed measured is 14 kph). They have a head shaped like a coffin.

The Black Mamba is not actually black. They have a brownish-grey body with a light belly and brownish scales along its back. It gets its name from the colour of the lining of its mouth, which is purple-black, and which it displays when threatened.

The Black Mamba lives in South Africa. They like open, low habitats such as savannahs, rocky places and open woodlands. They are active during the day. They often sleep in hollow trees, burrows, rock crevices, or empty termite mounds, and will come back to the same place every night. They can strike from 1.2-1.8 m away.

## Green Mamba



Green mambas reach an average of length of 1.8 meters, with a maximum length of up to 3.7 meters.

The body is slender and bright green, with scales laid like paving stones against darker skin. The dorsal scales are darker than the scales on the belly.

These beautiful fast-moving snakes are highly venomous, but less aggressive than black mambas. Green mambas hunt during the day for birds, frogs, lizards, rodents or other small mammals.

They will hunt on the ground if suitable prey cannot be found in the trees. When disturbed or threatened, mambas prefer to flee, moving at speeds up to 11.2 kph, but will strike when cornered.

## Boomslang



The Boomslang is widespread in South Africa except in dry desert areas. The Boomslang is fond of trees and seems to glide along branches with effortless ease.

The name "Boomslang" is from the Afrikaans - "Boom" means tree and "slang" means snake, therefore "tree snake" an apt description. The Boomslang feeds on chameleons, lizards and small birds.

The head is blunt with very large eyes. The colour varies considerably and this causes the Boomslang to be wrongly identified on many occasions. The venom is very poisonous and can cause death from internal bleeding 1 to 3 days after being bitten.

## **Egg-Eating Snake**

*(Dasypeltisscabra)*



The egg-eating snake favours areas which are nesting places of birds. This snake has virtually no teeth.

The colouring varies considerably from light brown to grey. The markings are a more reliable means of identification, the most characteristic being the dark V-shaped mark on the neck with the apex pointing towards the snout.

The belly is generally cream-coloured in the case of the brown specimens and white in the case of the grey ones. This snake is fairly slender and the head small and rounded at the snout. Care should be taken not to confuse this snake with the Night Adder. In length it seldom exceeds one meter