## Prevention of adder bite

- It is difficult to prevent bites from occurring.
- If you are concerned, keep your dog on a lead when walking in areas where adders are known to be present.
- Be especially vigilant in long grass and around stone walls where adders like to sleep.

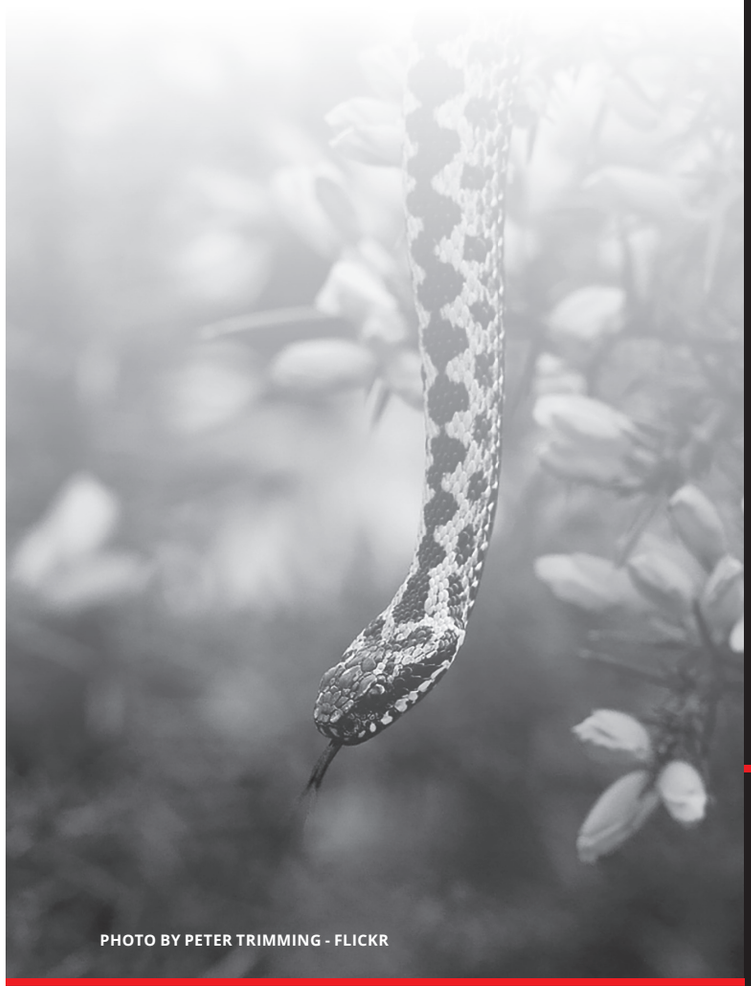


PHOTO BY PETER TRIMMING - FLICKR

## What to do if you think your pet has been poisoned

### EMERGENCY ADVICE

- Call Animal PoisonLine on 01202 509000 even if your pet is showing no signs to find out whether a trip to the vet is required.
- Do not panic.
- Do not interfere with the bite.
- Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Do not attempt to touch or catch the snake.
- Do not kill the snake – it is a protected species.
- If practical, carry your dog to your car and go to your veterinary surgeon - do not delay seeking advice even if your pet is well.

Animal POISONLine 24hr advice for owners

**01202 509000**

**www.animalpoisonline.co.uk**
24 hours a day (charges apply)

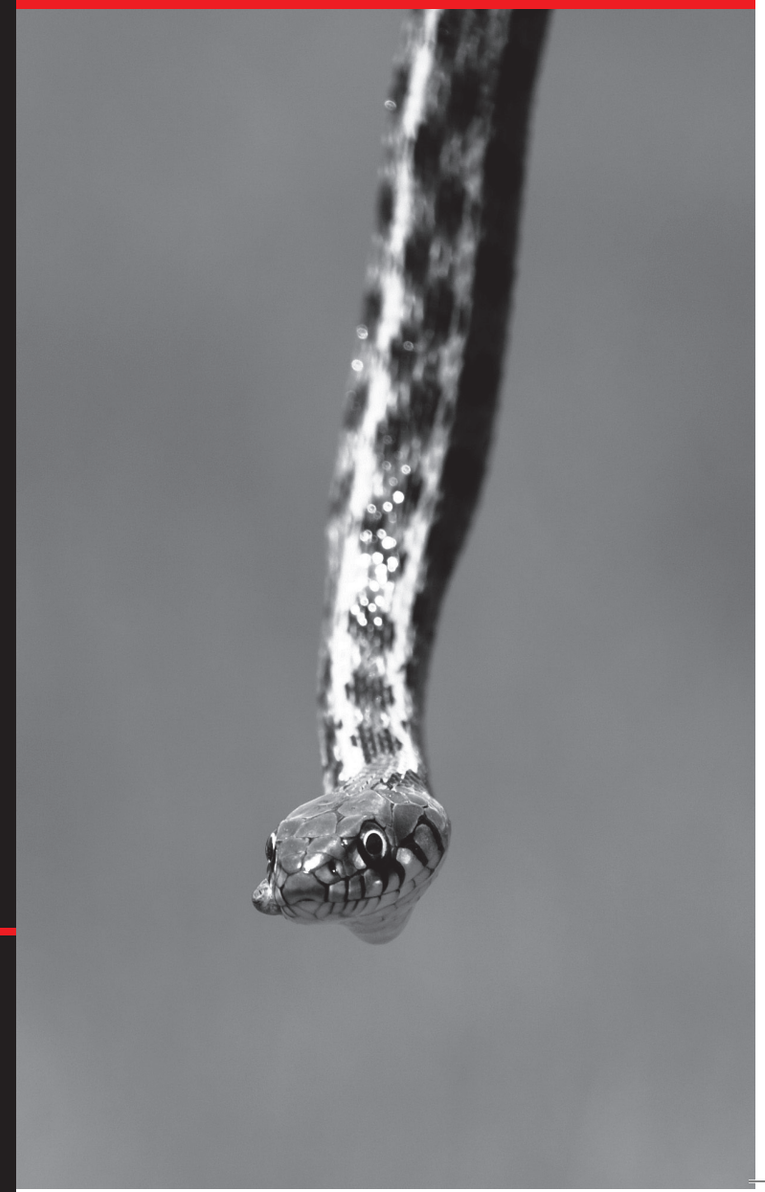
VETERINARY POISONS INFORMATION SERVICE

Animal PoisonLine is run by the VPIS, the UK's only animal poison centre, which has provided advice to vets on the management of poisoning in animals for over 25 years.

Animal POISONLine 24hr advice for owners

**01202 509000**

# ADDER BITES



## What is the adder?

The adder (*Vipera berus berus*) is the only venomous snake native to the UK, and is also found across northern Europe. It is a protected species in the UK.

The adult snake is 50-60 cm long and varies in colour from pale grey to dark brown in the male, and from olive green/yellowish-brown to reddish-brown in the female. It has a black/brown zig-zag pattern on its back (which may only be seen in strong sun light) and a V-shaped marking on the head.

The adder also has the vertical slit pupils rather than the round pupils of the other native, non-venomous snakes, the grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) and the smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*).

## When do adder bites occur?

Adders are most commonly, but not exclusively, found on dry, sandy heaths, sand dunes, rocky hillsides, moorlands and woodland edges.

Adders are not aggressive and generally only bite when provoked. They hibernate in the winter and as a result most bites occur in the summer. Pets are frequently bitten on the leg, head or neck.

## What are the signs of an adder bite?

**The venom of the adder is a complex mix of chemical compounds that cause a variety of effects on the body.**

**The clinical signs of an adder bite can include:**

- Rapid, progressive, local swelling around the bite site
- Pain
- Lethargy
- Collapse
- Vomiting
- Panting
- Lameness
- Bruising
- Bleeding

## What to do if an adder has bitten your pet

- If your pet has been bitten by an adder (even if you did not see the snake or are not sure what happened) – contact your vet immediately.
- Your vet will examine your pet to determine the location of the bite and extent of the swelling.
- Your vet may need to call the Veterinary Poisons Information Service for appropriate treatment advice.
- There is an antivenom available but it is not always necessary.

## Outcome of adder bite

The prognosis is good in most cases and administration of adder antivenom can lead to rapid improvement in clinical signs.

Without adder antivenom signs can progress over the first 24 hours or so and persist for several days.