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## Murdoch University warns all dog owners about hidden snakebite signs

With the arrival of summer just days away, dog owners have been warned to monitor their dogs closely this summer, especially if they live or walk near bushland reserves. According to Murdoch University's Dr Katrin Swindells, it is often difficult to tell when a dog has been bitten.

"While some dogs (and cats) will show symptoms known as pre-paraletic signs such as periods of wobbliness, collapsing, inappropriate urination or defecation, or vomiting, others will not show any signs – and a bite site can be extremely hard to find amongst their hair," she said.

"Your pet may not feel any pain, there may not be any swelling and they may not yelp or cry. Some pets show no initial symptoms, but can stop breathing within an hour of being bitten."

"If you see your pet come into contact with a snake, take it to your vet immediately for assessment."

Dr Swindells added that animals can die from paralysis caused by the venom in a venomous snake bite – so it's important for owners to act immediately to treat the animal with anti-venom.

### Dr Swindell's advice for all pet owners.

"If your dog or cat has killed a snake, take them and the snake to your vet – so they can identify the kind of anti-venom your pet needs. But don't kill the snake. Not only is it illegal, it puts your own safety at risk. Vets can usually run tests to learn what kind of snake has bitten your pet."

Unlike first aid training for people, pressure bandages are not recommended for pets with suspected snake bites. "Animals are most commonly bitten around their head, neck, shoulders and chest – so a pressure bandage in any of these areas would interfere with the animal's breathing."

The good news, according to Dr Swindells, is that survival rates are generally high, around 90% of pets expected to survive if they receive the correct treatment.

Sometimes the cost of anti-venom, which can range between \$300 and \$2000 depending on the type, can prevent pet owners from proceeding with treatment, so in some cases the pet is euthanased. Dr Swindells recommends pet insurance to ensure that owners can afford the cost of treatments in emergency situations.

For more information about snake bites and your pets, please visit <http://snakebites.murdoch.edu.au>

### About Murdoch University Veterinary Hospital

Open hours for General Practice 8.30am-6pm.

Murdoch Pet Emergency Centre open 24 hours, 7 days a week.

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