



## News from Murdoch University

### **Murdoch University snake facts: Understanding snake behaviour**

In cartoons, novels and Hollywood blockbusters, snakes are generally portrayed as slimy, deadly villains – but there’s a lot more to know about these fragile creatures. Murdoch University’s Lecturer in Veterinary Pharmacology Tim Hyndman shares some snake facts to help us understand why snakes act like they do.

#### **Snakes are shy.**

“Snakes will always want to be somewhere where they don’t feel exposed,” said Tim. “They want to feel secure and also want to keep warm. This is the reason they like sheets of hot tin and also why they are sometimes found underneath refrigerators in winter time.”

#### **Biting is a snake’s last form of defence.**

“Snakes are considerably more scared of you than you are of them. Snakes don’t have arms to push you away and they can’t tell you to go away; all they have is the option to escape by slithering away, which is their first choice, or as a last resort they will try and defend themselves. “

#### **Snakes start moving in the morning.**

“Many snakes will try to find a nice warm place to spend the night. They will still invariably cool down quite a bit overnight and so often when the sun first comes up the snakes will come out to try and warm themselves up. It is this time when many people may stumble across a snake. Normally, snakes will detect the vibrations of our movement well before we see them and will vacate the area before we get there but on these mornings, sometimes the snakes can be quite sluggish as they haven’t quite warmed up yet.”

#### **Snakes may return to the same area.**

“Studies have been done on some venomous species found in suburban areas, and found that relocating a snake within a couple of kilometres from the property it was found on won’t achieve much, as many snakes will return to where they were removed. So it is important that if a snake is to be relocated, it is done many kilometres away.”

Find out how to keep your pets safe from snakes this summer, or what to do if you find a snake at home.