

# Dogs 'n' Adders



**The only venomous snake in the UK is the adder (*Vipera berus*). Dogs are occasionally bitten by adders; although the bites are painful they are very rarely fatal. Although widespread throughout the UK adders are a protected species and it is illegal to kill or injure them.**

Adders are quite timid in nature and will not usually bite unless they feel threatened or cornered. They prefer to move on if given the chance to do so. Due to their inquisitive nature dogs can sometimes disturb adders whilst exploring undergrowth making them susceptible to being bitten.



Most adder encounters occur during their active season between March and October. To prevent your dog encountering an adder, keep them to paths and under control (preferably on a lead) in areas where adders are known to occur during March to October. This will also prevent disturbance to ground nesting birds such as the nightjar.

If your pet is bitten by an adder (or you suspect that it may have been) you should seek prompt veterinary attention. Do not attempt first aid measures such as sucking out the venom or applying a tourniquet - these procedures are ineffective and may even cause further harm to your pet. Try to keep your pet calm and wherever possible carry your dog rather than let it walk. Both these measures will help slow the spread of venom around the body.

The severity of signs seen in animals as a result of snake bites is variable. Most adder bites result in pain and inflammation around the muzzle, where bites usually occur. Vets in areas where adders occur tend to be experienced in treating pets that have received bites. Bites from adders are rarely fatal and most dogs make a full recovery.





## Adder identification

The adder is easily recognised by a dark 'zig-zag' stripe along its back. Background colours vary from grey - white in the male to shades of brown or copper in the female.

On occasion, completely black specimens are described.

They can grow to around 60cm in length and have a rather stocky appearance.

For more information on snake identification please visit our website:

[www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org)

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