

Snakes in the LSR Neighborhood

For all our neighbors and property owners we would like to remind you that snakes are a natural part of Hays County and the Lost Springs Ranch environment. Our proximity to the Blanco River, and rural location, and our very rocky and brushy terrain attracts all kinds of poisonous and non-poisonous snakes. Snakes are a natural and important part of our environment, but poisonous snakes require extra caution. Rattlesnakes, Coral Snakes, Copperheads, and Water Moccasins (adjacent to the Blanco river) have been regularly reported over the years.

Information about snakes and their habits

Most snakebites occur between April and October when the weather is still warm and outdoor activities are popular. Late winter and spring are the usual breeding season which makes snakes more active and aggressive as they begin feeding after winter and are trying to get the attention of female snakes. Late summer and fall are typically hatching season and more snakes may be seen.

- About 7,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the United States annually.
- Only 0.2% (1 out of 500) venomous snakebites result in death.
- On average, 1 to 2 people in Texas die each year from venomous snakebites.
- Roughly half of all venomous snakebites are “dry.” That is, the snake does not inject venom into the victim.

Because snakes are cold-blooded, they prefer sun and/or stretching out on warm surfaces like rocks, pavement and other heat-absorbing materials when temperatures are cooler. But in the heat of the summer, they prefer shade, especially from the midday sun.

People need to take these environmental conditions into account. On a cool morning, you may find a snake sunning on a rock along a hiking trail or the stones in a walkway or a paved walking trail. When it's hot they may be in the shade under a bush or sheet of plywood or in a brush pile. These are things to consider when you go outside.

Venomous snakes typically do not want to use their venom as a defense. They usually give warnings – like rattlesnakes rattling – before they strike. The Texas Department of Health Services reported that half the reported bites by venomous snakes were “dry,” meaning no venom was injected into the victim. A snake strikes because it views you as a threat. Producing venom is an energetically costly process, and they only have so much. If they use it, they must make more to hunt for food, and they have to work for every single meal, so striking to defend themselves is something they would rather avoid. To avoid snake bites, people should consider their location and be cautiously aware of where they step or reach, such as picking up a log for firewood.

Reduce snake attractors around the house

There are no chemical repellants proven to deter snakes, but there are two things homeowners can do to reduce the likelihood of snakes hanging around a location – remove potential shelter and food.

It's best to take the habitat approach and remove the things that attract snakes. Cutting the grass, removing brush and debris, and trimming the lower branches on bushes and trees will go a long way in reducing the places a snake might want to hide. Reducing hiding spots for snakes will also reduce hiding spots for the prey they seek, like rats and mice. Cleaning around the house and other structures to remove trash, which is shelter for small prey animals, also helps keep snakes away. Feeding pets indoors, and reducing access to water for pets and livestock will reduce the numbers of small animals (frogs, lizards, etc.) which snakes view as a food source.

Teach children not to reach inside crevices and under bushes with low-hanging limbs. They need to know they shouldn't reach into a place if they can't see what might be in there. Property owners should also take precautions to reduce the chance of their pet encountering a snake, such as having them penned in enclosed areas, and on a leash during walks.

Snake fences are considered an expensive method, and often of limited success, for preventing snakes on your property. Remember most snakes are excellent climbers. Such fences should be 36 inches tall and should be installed with specific materials, and by a professional who can first evaluate their effectiveness in your environment. Architectural Committee review and approval of fence installations is required within LSR and should be professional in construction and within your property and build lines.

Information provided by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension Svcs. and Texas A&M AgriLife Today