
Snake Safety Tips

Of Colorado's 30 snake species, only three pose a threat to humans: the prairie rattlesnake, the Western rattlesnake and the massasauga rattlesnake.

Observe and share the following safety tips to better understand snake behavior:

1. **Rattlesnakes like to hide.** Snakes do not like to interact with humans or other animals. If the snake coils up and rattles, this is your cue to back away slowly – even a few feet back will put the snake at ease. Most rattlesnakes will not strike unless they feel threatened or are provoked in some way.

2. **Don't touch any snake. Ever.** Even though most Colorado snakes are not venomous, all snakes do have teeth and will bite.

3. **Watch your feet and hands.** Most people experience snake bites on the hands. Keeping your fingers and hands hidden is a good idea. Don't hike in tall grass where you can't see where you are planting your feet. If you are on a rocky trail or an area with downed trees, be aware of what's on the other side of a rock or tree. Move slowly. Use a walking stick. Invest in a pair of snake-proof boots or high-top hiking boots to protect feet and ankles. Don't listen to music on your iPod. You need your ears to listen to nature...and possibly a snake's warning rattle.

4. **If you are out with dogs, keep them close.** Man's best friend is curious by nature. Snakes are defensive

by nature. When hiking, keep dogs on a short leash. Though controversial, some veterinarians will administer a rattlesnake vaccine. Speak to your vet for recommendations. If your dog is bitten, seek veterinary treatment immediately.

5. **If you are bitten by a snake, remain calm and seek medical attention.** Odds are the snake is probably not venomous. You should seek medical attention as soon as possible. Do not cut the bite open., or try to suck out the venom. If you have cell phone service, it's best to call in advance so the medical facility can be prepared with the appropriate treatment.

6. **We need snakes.** All snakes – rattlers included – play a vital role in our ecosystems. Snakes eat rats, mice, and prairie dogs, and help control the insect population. Snakes are the “middle child” in the food chain, serving as food sources for raptors and other predators. Respect snakes when you cross paths with them in the wild.

What This Means for Counties

For more information, please contact CTSI's Loss Prevention Team at 303-861-0507.

Jackson, T. (2015, April 15). Colorado Rattlesnakes: What Sportsmen Should Know. Retrieved June 28, 2016, from www.coloradooutdoorsmag.com