

Snakebite Awareness Training

Part 2: Lesson 13 - Keeping Snakes Out Of Your Compound

Most Likely Places To Encounter A Snake In Your Compound

What are some reasons that you might find a snake in your compound?

1. Looking for food (rodents, pets, farm animals)
2. Looking for a place to hide (shelter)
3. Sunning itself to raise its body temperature

What are the types of places that snakes might be encountered based on these three reasons:

- Rocks, rock piles, brick piles, wood piles
- Tall grasses (to hide)
- Bushes and trees
- Under flat pieces of wood, metal, plastic; maybe under a tarpaulin
- In storage areas
- In outdoor furniture with cushions
- In an outhouse (latrine)
- In a fire pit
- Near animal pens or enclosures
- Near sources of water
- Other places where it would be easy for them to hide

Keeping Your Compound As Snake-Free As Possible

Just like you will develop habits to check your home as routinely as possible, do the same with the areas outside of your house. As much as possible, try to develop habits to check and fix the following (adapted from Stephen Spawls and Bill Branch in “Dangerous Snakes of Africa”):

1. Remove any hiding places for snakes, such as rock piles, wood piles, bricks, pits, and rubbish heaps. Keep the ground cleared.
2. If you see any holes in the ground near the house, fill them or block them (termite mounds, squirrel holes, and so on)
3. Keep the grass cut short - snakes love to hide in tall grasses and are harder to see
4. Cut back any tree or bushes that touch the house, as a snake can use those to climb up and into your house. Also, keep litter cleared under trees and bushes.
5. Water sources outside the house can attract snakes, or even frogs that the snakes like to eat - plus these can be breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Even the drip of a leaking faucet can be a problem.
6. Snakes are attracted to chickens and eggs, rabbits, and caged birds. Or they can be attracted by food in open containers that might attract rodents. Keep these animals or food in an area away from your house.

7. Guinea fowl and turkeys are known to attack and eat snakes, and so are cats, so these might be good to have around.
8. Animals will often give off warning signals when a predator is around. Pay attention to these signals, especially warning sounds or nervousness in the animals.
9. Sometimes you might want to go out and check on your animals at night. If you do, make sure you have a torch, and watch where you step and how close you are to potential hiding areas.
10. Be careful when moving objects or stored materials outside, as snakes can be hiding underneath or behind them.
11. If you need to lift something outside, roll it toward you and look underneath before lifting. If you roll it away from you, a snake might be hiding underneath and come toward you.
12. Check in the cushions and underneath before you sit down on outdoor furniture.
13. If you have a garden or are farming, do not use short-handled tools as these get your hands into the striking zone of a snake. Use long-handled tools if you can.
14. When gardening, be very careful about sitting on the ground and where you place your hands while working or when you get up.
15. If you have a latrine, check inside the latrine before you sit on the toilet seat.

16. Be very cautious during the rainy season, as that is when snakes become more active. Especially use caution when walking on roads at night after a heavy rain. If you are farming, be aware that snakebites often occur during plowing, planting, and harvesting.

17. If you are really concerned and can afford it, you can put up a snake barrier around your property. The barrier fence must be at least one meter in height. Make it from thick shade cloth or wire netting with a fine mesh. Attach it to posts with the bottom at least 20-30 cm underground. Make sure gates fit snugly with no gaps (courtesy of Stephen Spawls).