

Working with venomous snakes

A two day course presented by Cool Companions.

Course overview

This course is designed to give you an in-depth understanding of snake behaviour (focussing in particular on venomous Australian species), and train you to safely work with both captive and wild venomous snakes. Snake behaviour is discussed in detail, drawing on both published information and the trainers' own experiences. Various aspects of snake behaviour are also demonstrated with live snakes in the classroom.



A fundamental understanding of snake biology is vital when working with these animals, and participants will leave the course with a sound knowledge of this. Classification, snake identification and common snakes of Australia are discussed, with live examples of many species. In order to work with snakes, one must think like a snake. We'll take you inside a snake's mind and discover why snakes do what they do.

Working with venomous snakes both in the wild and in captivity requires special skills and equipment. Participants will learn about snake handling equipment, hygiene, parasites and euthanasia. The effects of translocation, and translocation guidelines are discussed in detailed for those participants wanting to obtain a damage mitigation permit (allowing the removal of snakes from private property).

Snakebite and its effects are also discussed at length, covering the symptoms of snakebite, clinical effects of the venom from various snake species, first aid, what to expect in hospital after a bite and possible reactions to antivenoms.

Day two of the course sees participants put the knowledge they've gained into practice, with handling exercises designed to simulate real world situations. Real snakes are used, working up from snappy pythons and tree snakes to non-deadly snakes like red-bellied black snakes and then dangerously venomous species like eastern brown snakes.



Identification exercises occur on both days. These enable participants to develop the skills and obtain the knowledge required to identify snakes in the field. Live animals, preserved specimens and pictures are all used.

Participant requirements

To participate in the practical component of the course (i.e., to work with our snakes) you must:

- be at least 18 years of age
- have a concern for the welfare of the animals you'll be working with
- wear ankle-high boots (not Ugg Boots!)
- wear socks
- wear long pants (the thicker the better, as long as they don't impede your movement)
- have no alcohol in your bloodstream



If you have any of the following you should seriously reconsider handling venomous snakes:

- known allergies to snake venom, horse proteins, antivenoms
- medications that may reduce your reaction time or ability to think clearly
- medical conditions such as epilepsy
- anticoagulants, beta blockers or ACE inhibitors (these can hinder treatment of snakebite)

If you have any queries about any of these conditions, please contact us to discuss options.

Course information

This course is run in two ways. Once or twice a year we run it at a location around Brisbane. Anyone is free to attend, provided they meet the above requirements. When run this way, the course costs approximately \$475 per person (inc. GST).

We can also deliver the course anywhere in Australia for specific organisations (minimum costs apply). The course can be tailored to suit individual organisations' needs. Please contact us for more information.

About the trainers

Cool Companions is the education and training arm of the Dreamtime Wildlife Sanctuary, a private wildlife sanctuary west of Brisbane that cares for around 500 animals. Some of the activities we're involved in are:

- delivering educational presentations to schools and community groups
- wildlife-based training courses, such as reptile husbandry
- wildlife displays in shopping centres, school fetes, etc.
- supplying animals and handlers for film, TV and photographic work
- research into wildlife biology and husbandry

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