

DOGS AND SNAKEBITE !

EASTERN MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKES

Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnakes live in Oakland County. They are the only venomous snake in Michigan. Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnakes are protected and listed as a species of special concern. Well camouflaged and rare, they often go unseen. Rattlesnakes lie motionless, unless sensing they are in danger, and then may rattle (buzz) a warning when approached. If given a chance, a Massasauga will retreat. They often seek a secluded refuge after the disturbance has passed. Conflicts are easily avoided by leaving snakes alone.

Dogs tend to investigate new sights and sounds. Some dogs, when faced with something unusual, will stand their ground at a safe distance and bark while other breeds run in to challenge, grab or attempt to kill the snake. This latter behavior puts dogs at risk of being bitten by the normally shy and secretive Eastern Massasauga. Dog owners should be aware of the presence of rattlesnakes while visiting the parks.

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BITES

occur to the leg, but more frequently to the face as dogs use their nose to investigate their surroundings. If the dog is bitten on the head, the situation is more serious due to the speed with which the venom could impair the dog's respiratory functions. Some veterinarians suggest an oral administration of BENADRYL if swelling causes tracheal obstruction. Pet owners should consult with their veterinarians regarding treatment.

If your dog surprises a rattlesnake and is bitten:

- Look for swelling, pain, or signs of discomfort.
- Massasauga bites are distinguished from non-venomous snake bites by 1-2 puncture wounds, often not evident due to fur.
- Try to identify the snake, but avoid getting bitten yourself.
- Limit movement as much as possible—do not let the dog walk. If possible, keep the bitten area below the heart level. Do not apply tourniquets, ice or suction to treat the wound.
- Take your pet **IMMEDIATELY** to a veterinarian.
- Do not delay seeking treatment, due to time of night, holidays or weekends. With immediate treatment, few deaths have occurred.
- Report all bites to park authorities.

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Venomous

snakes do not always inject venom when they strike, and your vet must first establish if your pet has been envenomated. Next the vet must establish the degree of envenomation. In mild cases, only pain killers may be given. In serious cases, fluid therapy is required to restore blood pressure and epinephrine or corticosteroids and antihistamines are injected to treat allergic reaction and swelling. Nose and head bites can be dangerous because swelling may cut off nasal or tracheal air passages.

Antivenom is seldom administered to dogs because the cost is prohibitive, except in very serious cases. There is a good chance of recovery without the administration of antivenom and allergic reactions to antivenom have occurred. If you are not sure if your dog was bitten by a venomous snake, look for signs of severe asymmetrical swelling or pain which may occur up to two hours later.

Prevention is the best policy:

- While walking, control your dog with a six-foot leash.
- Do not allow your dog to explore holes in the ground or dig under logs or other natural objects.
- Stay on the trails and be alert. Look ahead and scan your surroundings.
- If you see or hear a rattlesnake, keep your pet at your side. Locate the snake and move away.
- Learn to identify local snakes in your area. Visit the Wint Nature Center at Independence Oaks County Park near Clarkston for classes and information. Visit DestinationOakland.com for phone numbers and locations.



Emergency Vet Contacts:

Remember that the quick recovery of your family pet from venomous snakebite depends on prompt veterinary treatment. Go to your vet or go immediately to these emergency veterinary care facilities:

- **Animal Emergency Center**
Rochester 248.651.1788
265 East Second Street –
open evenings, weekends and holidays
Carries antivenom
- **Animal Emergency Center**
Novi 248.348.1788
24255 Novi Road –
open 24 hours/seven days, including holidays
Carries antivenom
- **Oakland Veterinary Care**
Bloomfield Hills 248.334.6877
1400 Telegraph Road –
Open 24 hours/seven days, including holidays