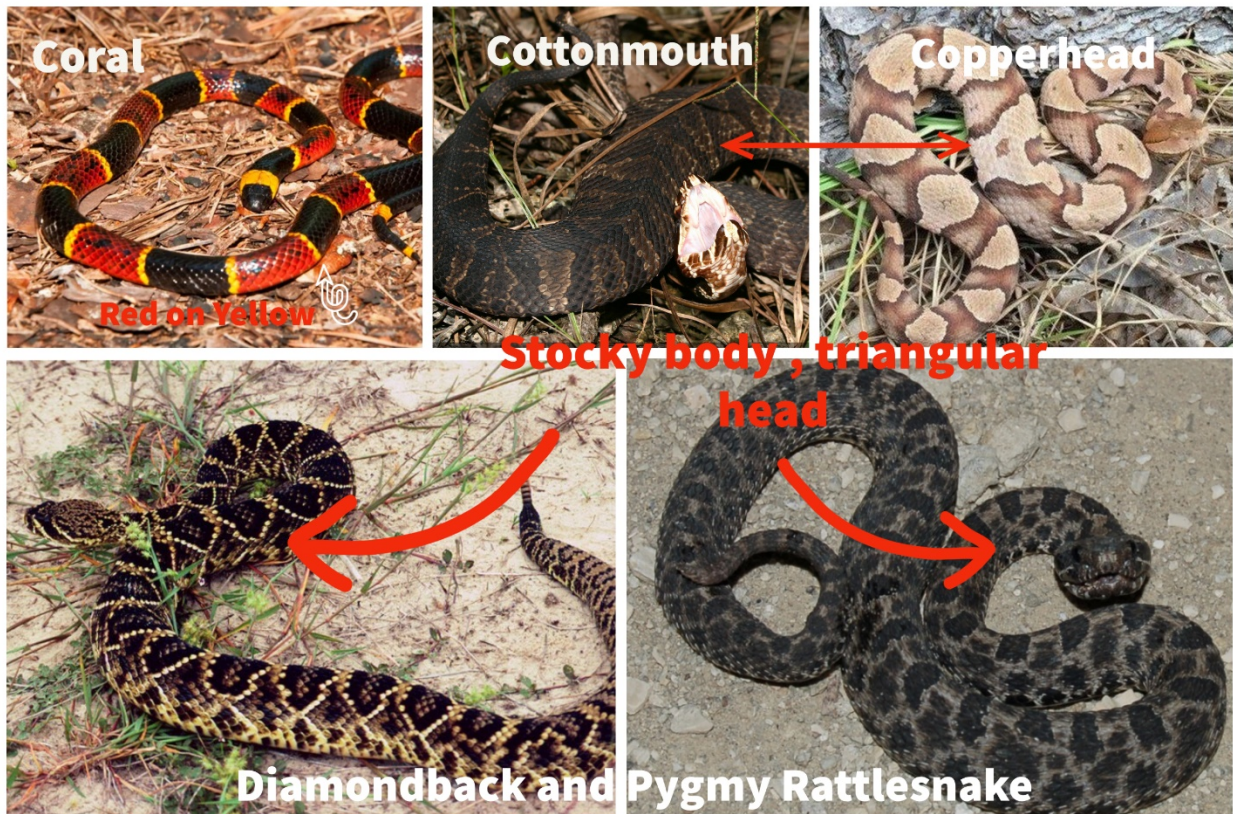


IT IS SNAKEBITE SEASON IN NAPLES by Heather Kaufman

Every year from April to October, the number of snake bites spike due to the warmer temperatures. The five snakes you see below are the ones to be vigilant of and to have an emergency plan for. We currently have a neighbor in ICU from a snake bite. We continue to pray for a complete recovery. After speaking with one of the local pest techs, he said most snakes he has encountered have been spotted around the AC units and house shrubbery. A local landscaper has confirmed this assessment.



The Coral snake has the most toxic venom bite in North America; however, it is the most reclusive. Bites are extremely rare. Do not be confused with the lack of triangular shaped head as this snake is not a viper. To ID remember the rhyme “red on yellow will kill a fellow,” meaning the band colors next to each other. Not to be confused with the remarkably similar Scarlet-King snake, “red on black- safe for jack.” Some residents have had these in their pool as they are tiny enough to get under the pool cage door.

Copperheads are not generally aggressive and avoid direct contact with people and pets. Most bites occur when the snakes are intentionally molested or accidentally stepped on, however they have the least potent venom of the Florida Vipers.

The Cottonmouth / Water Moccasin is a very stocky, dark colored snake with a triangular head. They tend to be extremely aggressive and extremely dangerous. They will usually retreat when approached but often hold their ground. If they decide to hold their ground, the first thing they do is coil up followed by opening their mouth displaying the white lining in their mouth. At this point they will not move until the danger has passed. They will strike profusely if harassed while in the coiled position.

The Rattlesnakes (Diamond-backed) is the most dangerous but much less aggressive than the Cottonmouth. It has very toxic venom. Deadly human bites are rare however, and usually involve a person trying to maneuver the snake by hand or with a stick. **(Pygmy)** is Florida's smallest rattlesnake. Most times, they do not rattle unless they feel threatened. The pygmies are the source of one of the most common venomous snake bites in Florida because children often pick them up.

Develop a Plan. Prepare for immediate action if a venomous snake has bitten you, someone you are with, or a pet. You should develop a household plan. If a snake has bitten a person, the first step in executing this plan is to immediately call 911 for prompt medical care. Be sure that emergency numbers are posted in a location accessible to all family members. These emergency numbers should include 911, Physicians Regional (239) 354-6000, and the Poison Control Hotline (800)222-1222.

Once bitten, twice shy. If a snake has bitten you, try to identify the snake type. Remove any jewelry that could restrict circulation should swelling occur. If the bite is on an extremity (hand, arm, foot, leg), keep the bitten area extremity immobilized in a position lower than the heart. Also keep the victim calm and limit their physical activity. Commence your emergency plan. Wash the bite wound with soap and water. Do not apply ice, heat, a tourniquet or try and suck out the venom. GROSS!

If you suspect a snake has bitten your pet, immediate medical care is also essential. Not all animal clinics carry antivenin or are equipped to provide the care your pet will need. We? reached out to the closest vet emergency hospital and confirmed that they have the antivenin on site. The phone number to *Bluepearl* emergency pet hospital is 239-263-0480 and located at 10130 Market St #1 Naples, FL 34102. Keep your pet calm and comfortable and limit its activity to a minimum and take it to the animal hospital as quickly as possible. It is important to be able to recognize the symptoms of a venomous snakebite in your pet. Symptoms vary, depending on the type of venomous snake that inflicted the bite (see pictured). If a pet is bitten, the most obvious symptom will be localized swelling at the bite site. There may also be bleeding from the fang wounds and your pet will likely become quiet or lethargic, and/or develop a very swollen head, neck, or nose.

The takeaway. *If you find a snake and do not know whether it is non-venomous (harmless) or venomous, the safest thing to do is leave it alone. Regardless of what people say, Florida snakes are not aggressive, and unless they feel threatened, most will flee when they see you. Should you need help with snake removal, local Wildlife Biologist Cole McCollum is available at 239-935-0021. (The information in this article is not an endorsement by the Winding Cypress HOA)*