



## 4.11 Snakes

### Written By

Narelle Myers

### Aim

This policy aims to clearly define:

- The risk of snakes at Bermagui Preschool
- Procedures for preventing snake bites
- The appropriate medical response to snake bites
- A framework for the appropriate education and training of staff, parents and children on minimising the risk of snake bites

### Values

Bermagui Preschool is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children and staff participating in the program
- Being respectful of wildlife in and around the Preschool and while on excursions, including an awareness of the presence of snakes in the area during the warmer months
- Facilitating appropriate communication and education to staff and parents to minimise the risk of injury from a snake bite to children and staff

### Background

Although Bermagui Preschool is not recognised as a site where snakes may be present, as with rural settings and while on excursions, encounters with snakes may occur. They are most prevalent in the warmer months of the year (September to April) but could be encountered on a sunny day at any time of the year. Species of snakes that may be found in Bermagui include brown snakes, red belly black snakes, tiger snakes, and copperheads. All snakes should be regarded as dangerous. However, if unprovoked, snakes rarely attack humans and are generally shy, timid animals that will void conflict if given the opportunity. It is recommended that particular care be taken in warm weather, near long grass or hollow logs, near water or rocks in sunny positions. Snakes are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975, and should not be harmed or killed. Bites can occur if people try to catch or kill snakes.

## PROCEDURE

The Nominated Supervisor/ Responsible Person is responsible for:

- Supplying a First Aid kit on site at Bermagui Preschool at all times to administer first aid in response to snake bites or for any other necessary purpose which includes pressure immobilisation bandages for medical treatment of snake bites
- Ensuring staff are appropriately educated on procedures to prevent snake bites and to deliver First Aid in response to a snake bite
- Following all procedures as set out in the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy (including notice of notifiable incidents, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, maintaining first aid kits etc)
- Practicing and educating children on snake bite prevention behaviours whilst at Bermagui Preschool, without fostering an unnatural fear of paranoia of snakes. This includes practicing and highlighting the following key points:
  - always leave snakes alone
  - wear adequate clothing and stout shoes (not sandals or thongs) in 'snake country'
  - never put hands in hollow logs or thick grass without prior inspection
  - when stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side
- Ensure children are reminded on a regular basis that if they encounter a snake, to move away quietly and report the sighting immediately to a teacher or educator
- In the event that a snake is encountered at Bermagui Preschool, calmly move children away from the snake (staff must not attempt to touch or harm the snake). Quietly have children leave playground and calmly tip-toe inside the building, or evacuate the building in same manner should the snake be inside. Sudden screaming or shouting will frighten the snake and it may scatter in the direction of the group of children. Initiate lockdown procedure if necessary (refer to policy)
- Administering first aid in the event of a snake bite

### First aid for snake bite:

- Stay calm and call for help. Have someone phone 000 for an ambulance. If unable to phone, send someone for help
- Reassure the patient and encourage them to remain calm and still. Do not move the patient
- Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake
- Do not wash the bite. Traces of venom that are left on the skin can be used to identify the snake, and therefore the type of anti-venom that should be used if required
- Venom is injected deeply so there is no benefit in cutting or sucking the bite. A tourniquet is not an effective way to restrict venom movement.
- The most effective first aid for a snake bite is the pressure immobilisation technique. The principle is to minimise the movement of the venom around the body until the victim is in a hospital by applying a firm bandage (or suitable alternative) to the bitten area and limb, and to immobilise the victim. When applied properly, this method can trap the venom in the bitten area for many hours. The victim might not suffer any effects of the venom until the compression is released, which is done in hospital where anti-venom can be administered if required.
- Staff are to follow procedures as set out in the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy, including contacting parents, calling an ambulance etc
- Report to WIRES (1300 094 737) or pest exterminator: (02) 6499 2222 (BVSC office).
- For injured wildlife contact Bermagui Veterinary Clinic: 02 6493 4813

**Resources & References**

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Sections 167, 169  
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 87, 89, 136, 137(1)(e), 168(2)(a), 245  
National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety; and Quality Area 3: Physical Environment  
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004  
Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007  
Wildlife Act 1975

**Date Adopted:**

October 2021

**Review Date:**

October 2024