

GUIDELINES FOR KEEPING VENOMOUS SNAKES IN THE NT

Venomous snakes are potentially dangerous to humans, and for this reason extreme caution must be exercised when keeping or handling them in captivity. Prospective venomous snake owners should be well informed about the needs and requirements for keeping these animals in captivity.

Permits

The keeping of protected wildlife in the Northern Territory is regulated by a permit system under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2006* (TPWC Act). Conditions are included on permits, and the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory ("PWCNT") may issue infringement notices or cancel permits if conditions are breached. A *Permit to Keep Protected Wildlife* enables people to legally possess native vertebrate animals in captivity in the Northern Territory. The permit system assists the PWCNT to monitor wildlife kept in captivity and to detect any illegal activities associated with the keeping of, and trade in, native wildlife.

Venomous snakes are protected throughout the Northern Territory and may not be removed from the wild without the appropriate licences and permits. People are required to hold a *Keep Permit (Category 1–3)* to legally keep venomous snakes in the Northern Territory.

Premises will be inspected by PWCNT staff to evaluate their suitability **prior** to any *Keep Permit (Category 1–3)* being granted. Approvals may also be required from local councils, the Northern Territory Planning Authority, and the Department of Health and Community Services. Consignment of venomous snakes between the Northern Territory and other States and Territories can only be undertaken with an appropriate import / export permit.

There are three categories of venomous snake permitted to be kept in captivity in the Northern Territory:

- *Keep Permit (Category 1)* – Mildly Dangerous Venomous
- *Keep Permit (Category 2)* – Dangerous Venomous
- *Keep Permit (Category 3)* – Highly Dangerous Venomous

Venomous snakes must be obtained from a legal source (i.e. another permit holder). A *Keep Permit (Category 1–3)* does not allow the holder to remove venomous snakes from the wild.

Pre-requisites and Restrictions

Venomous snakes are classified into three categories depending on the degree of risk they pose to humans.

Keep Permit (Category 1) – Mildly Dangerous Venomous

KEEP PROTECTED

Code	Scientific Name	Common Name
U2630	<i>Boiga irregularis</i>	Brown Tree Snake
W2631	<i>Cerberus australis</i>	Bockadam
E2634	<i>Enhydryis polylepis</i>	Macleay's Water Snake
Z2655	<i>Demansia psammophis</i>	Yellow-Faced Whip Snake
G2651	<i>Rhinoplocephalus pallidiceps</i>	Northern Small-Eyed Snake

- Applicants must be 18 years or older. Persons 14 to 17 years of age may be nominees on a permit held by a parent or guardian.
- No previous venomous snake experience is required.

Keep Permit (Category 2) – Dangerous Venomous

KEEP PROTECTED

Code	Scientific Name	Common Name
Z2663	<i>Suta punctata</i>	Little Spotted Snake
E2722	<i>Suta suta</i>	Myall or Curl Snake
K2653	<i>Demansia olivacea</i>	Olive Whip Snake
Y2652	<i>Demansia atra</i>	Black Whip Snake
M2654	<i>Demansia papuensis</i>	Papaun Whip Snake

KEEP PROHIBITED

Code	Scientific Name	Common Name
C2693	<i>Pseudechis porphyriacus</i>	Red-bellied Black Snake

- Applicants must be 18 years or older.
- Applicants must either:
 - a) have successfully completed a recognised training course in the handling and husbandry of venomous snakes; or
 - b) supply two written references from people who can attest to the applicants ability, knowledge and experience in the handling of venomous snakes. Referees must hold a current PWCNT *Keep Permit (Category 2 or 3)* or equivalent from an interstate authority.
- Applicants must have a minimum of 12 months experience in the keeping of venomous snakes or have held a *Keep Permit (Category 1)* or equivalent for at least 12 months.
- Applicants must hold a current First Aid certificate that covers treatment for snake bite.

Keep Permit (Category 3) – Highly Dangerous Venomous

KEEP PROTECTED

Code	Scientific Name	Common Name
A2640	<i>Acanthophis antarcticus</i>	Southern Death Adder
Y2804	<i>Acanthophis praelongus</i>	Northern Death Adder
C2641	<i>Acanthophis pyrrhus</i>	Desert Death Adder
K2689	<i>Oxyuranus microlepidotus</i>	Fierce Snake
Y2688	<i>Oxyuranus scutellatus</i>	Taipan
U2690	<i>Pseudechis australis</i>	Mulga or King Brown Snake
G2695	<i>Pseudonaja guttata</i>	Speckled Brown Snake
M2698	<i>Pseudonaja nuchalis</i>	Western Brown Snake
Z2699	<i>Pseudonaja textilis</i>	Common / Eastern Brown Snake

KEEP PROHIBITED

Code	Scientific Name	Common Name
–	<i>Acanthophis wellsi</i>	Pilbara Death Adder
W2691	<i>Pseudechis colletti</i>	Collett's Snake
A2692	<i>Pseudechis guttatus</i>	Blue-bellied / Spotted Black Snake

- Applicants must be 18 years or older.
- Applicants must either:
 - a) have successfully completed a recognised training course in the handling and husbandry of venomous snakes; or
 - b) supply two written references from people who can attest to the applicants ability, knowledge and experience in the handling of venomous snakes. Referees must hold a current PWCNT *Keep Permit (Category 3)* or equivalent from an interstate authority.
- Applicants must have a minimum of 12 months experience in keeping *Category 2 or 3* venomous snakes or have held a *Keep Permit (Category 2)* or equivalent for at least 12 months.
- Applicants must hold a current First Aid certificate that covers treatment for snake bite.

For medical reasons, permits will not be issued for any of the following snake families in the Northern Territory:

- *Austrelaps* (Copperhead snakes)
- *Hoplocephalus* (Broad-headed snakes)
- *Notechis* (Tiger snakes)
- *Tropidechis carinatus* (Rough-scaled Snake)
- *Rhinoplocephalus nigrescens* (Eastern Small-eyed Snake)

Exotic snakes (venomous or non-venomous) cannot be kept by private permit holders in the Northern Territory.

Housing

Owners are responsible for maintaining suitable conditions for venomous snakes in accordance with the *Northern Territory Animal Welfare Act 2000*. Owners are expected to provide protection for venomous snakes against predators, disease, pain, distress, suffering and injury.

Venomous snakes must be housed in lockable, escape-proof enclosures at all times. A snake should be able to stretch out to its full body length inside its enclosure and have access to a hide box or shelter. All *Category 2* and *3* venomous snakes must also be held within a locked, escape-proof room which prevents unauthorised entry.

Access to the room in which *Category 2* or *3* venomous snakes are housed must be under the direct control of the permit holder. Visitors must be accompanied by the permit holder at all times.

Feeding

Unlike most domestic pets, snakes do not require daily feeding. Snakes' feeding requirements will vary depending on a snake's age, breeding activity and general environmental conditions.

Live animals must not be fed to venomous snakes. All food items fed to venomous snakes must have been humanely euthanised.

Snakes require access to fresh water at all times. Water should be provided in a shallow container that allows the snake to enter and exit the water easily.

Handling

It is very important that snakes are handled correctly, as this will help to reduce the likelihood of injury to both the handler and snake. Ensure that you have clean hands before handling any snakes, especially if you have been handling food items such as mice.

Also, consider the following:

- Take a moment to assess the situation and observe the behaviour of your snake. You may avoid an incident by recognising that your snake is stressed, anxious or poised to strike.
- Do not handle snakes any more than is absolutely necessary.
- Always have another person present when handling venomous snakes in case you get into trouble and require assistance.
- If you are bitten by a venomous snake, seek medical attention immediately. The damage caused by the venom will increase over time, so waiting to see if you show symptoms is not a good strategy. Remain calm, sit quietly and await the arrival of an ambulance.
- Always wash your hands after handling snakes.

Transportation

Venomous snakes may only be moved from the permit holder's property when conducting a PWCNT approved transaction. A *Keep Permit (Category 1–3)* does not allow the permit holder to transport venomous snakes for display or exhibition without prior approval from the PWCNT.

Venomous snakes must be transported in fabric bags (one animal per bag) inside sealed containers. Transport containers must clearly identify the number and species of snake contained within. The word 'VENOMOUS' must also be displayed prominently on the container.

Ensure that all new snakes entering / exiting your collection are quarantined and the details of the supplier / receiver are recorded in the *Vertebrate Wildlife Records Book*, including the date, permit holder's name, address and permit number along with the snake's sex (if known) and length.