

# Rattlesnakes

Rattlesnakes are found in the following areas of Orange County: desert-like and brush covered regions, the foothills and adjacent districts, mountainous areas, and around subdivisions located in formerly “wild” areas.

The active season for rattlesnakes starts toward the end of spring when they come out of hibernation.

Most snakes will go back into hibernation when the colder weather months set in. The main food source for rattlesnakes is rodents, therefore, rodent and snake control go together. A rodent-free area is unattractive to rattlers, so remove rodent harborage. Snakes will hunt for food day or night so long as the outdoor temperature is not too cold. When the sun is too hot or when it is chilly, snakes will seek shelter under shrubs, logs, rocks, or any other place that offers protection against the weather.



In areas serviced by the Mission Viejo Animal Services Center, we will respond to and remove any rattlesnake that is injured, or deceased.

## How to discourage rattlesnake activity around your home:

- Snakes like to move through areas where they are not easily detected. Clear any shrubs, broken branches or overgrown bushes surrounding your property.
- A fence of heavy galvanized 1/4” mesh hardware cloth will keep snakes out of the premises when the lower edge is inserted 6” under the ground.
- Seal openings in or under buildings, and covering ventilators close to the ground with 1/4” hardware cloth will keep snakes from nesting under the property.
- Fill up gopher and squirrel holes with stones and dirt. Snakes use these as passageways, and will be deterred away from property if the route is closed.
- When clearing concealed areas such as ivy, lawns, and untrimmed shrubbery, poke ahead with a long stick. If a snake is there, it will either attack the stick or glide away quickly. The desire to avoid direct contact is mutual.

Mission Viejo Animal Services  
Serving the cities of  
Mission Viejo, Laguna Niguel, Aliso Viejo,  
Laguna Hills and Rancho Santa Margarita

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## Identification of Venomous Snakes in California

There is only one kind of venomous snake in California - the rattlesnake. There are six species of rattlesnakes in California, but they all have the same characteristics which are described below. All snakes, venomous or not, are important members of the natural wildlife community and are vital to the balance of nature. No snake should be needlessly killed.



**HEAD:**  
Narrow, barely distinguishable from neck.

### **NON-VENOMOUS SNAKES**



**BODY:**  
relatively thin or narrow

**TAIL:**  
tapers to a long, thin point (usually).  
Never with rattles at the end of the tail.

### **VENOMOUS SNAKES**



**HEAD:**  
broad, "triangular" in shape.

**BODY:**  
heavy or relatively "fat" in appearance

**TAIL:**  
blunt, usually ending in a cluster of modified scales.

the "rattle" (except in baby snakes) never tapers to a tipped point.