

# DEWNR PROCEDURE



Government of South Australia  
Department of Environment,  
Water and Natural Resources

Ref: MIGD 0168220

## Keeping Venomous Snakes Procedure

### What guides this Procedure?

- DEWNR Keeping Venomous Snakes Policy
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*
- *National Parks and Wildlife Regulations 2001*
- *Animal Welfare Act 1985*.

All venomous snakes that are native to South Australia are protected and cannot be kept in captivity without the appropriate permit(s) issued by DEWNR.

### What is the scope of this Procedure?

This Procedure applies to all Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) staff in the administration of matters on behalf of the SA Government, Minister and Department relating to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (the Act); specifically to issuing permits for the keeping of venomous snakes (Elapidae) in captivity.

### What is the context of this Procedure?

Keeping venomous snakes in captivity can present a potential risk to handlers and the public. This Procedure has been developed in the interests of minimising this risk through the administration of a permitting system. Permit holders will be required to demonstrate that they have the required levels of experience and knowledge and appropriate facilities to keep snakes safely.

### Who is responsible for what?

**Chief Executive:** Approve the Policy that accompanies this Procedure.

**Group Executive Director Strategy and Advice:** Approval of this Procedure.

**Executive Director Conservation and Land Management:** The periodical review of this Procedure.

**Fauna Permit Unit:** Granting permits involving the keeping of native animals.

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## What steps do I need to take to comply?

- DEWNR staff who have not undertaken a recognised course in venomous snake handling must not, under any circumstances, handle venomous snakes. Any trained DEWNR staff undertaking any activities involving snakes must comply with the DEWNR Safe Work Practice – Outdoor Activity: Snake Handling (Venomous and Non-Venomous).
- DEWNR's Fauna Permit Unit will issue permits to keep venomous snakes to applicants who meet the required criteria.

## What steps do members of the public need to take to comply with this procedure?

Anyone who wishes to keep a venomous snake in captivity must hold a Specialist Keep and Sell Permit issued by DEWNR. Venomous snakes are classed as 'Specialist Animals'.

Specialist animals must be acquired legally. They must be purchased from a licensed fauna dealer or person holding a valid Keep and Sell Permit (Specialist). These animals are fully protected and a permit is required to take them from the wild (Take from the Wild Permit).

### **When making an assessment whether or not to issue a permit to keep a venomous snake DEWNR will take some or all of the following requirements into consideration:**

Anyone who applies for a permit to keep and/or sell a venomous snake, must demonstrate that they have the facilities, knowledge and experience to safely and properly care for that animal. Referee checks will be undertaken to assist in determining if the applicant has the appropriate ability, knowledge and experience to safely and properly care for venomous snakes.

When applying for a permit:

- Applications are to be made in writing on a specialist application form and must address the pre-requisites for obtaining a permit.
- Applicants should be over eighteen (18) years of age. Consideration will be given to applicants over fifteen (15) years only where their legal guardian provides a letter supporting the application.
- The applicant must supply references, in writing, from two people who can attest to the applicant's ability, knowledge and experience in the handling of venomous snakes. These referees must hold, or have held, specialist permits authorising the keeping of venomous snakes and be experienced in the husbandry of these animals (new applications only). If applicants are from interstate, their previous experience in keeping venomous snakes would be taken into account during the application process.
- The applicant must:

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- provide a copy of their accreditation for completing a first aid course, issued by an approved first aid training provider. The first aid course must have included a component on treating snake bites,  
and/or
- provide evidence of their competency certified by a medical practitioner who specialises in this field.
- The applicant must provide a copy of a certificate or written competency statement to show training they have undertaken to gain experience in handling venomous snakes (e.g. Venomous Snake Handler's Certificate).

Applicants must have a Keep and Sell Permit (Specialist) to keep one individual animal listed as Specialist. Permit holders may also keep and sell animals included in the Basic lists.

Other requirements for permit holders:

- Anyone advertising Specialist or Basic animals for sale must include their permit number in the advertisement.
- Holders of a Keep and Sell Permit (Specialist) can only sell specialist animals to other holders of a Keep and Sell Permit who are endorsed for that particular specialist species.
- The holder of a Keep and Sell Permit (Specialist) must also maintain a record book and submit two stock returns to the [DEWNR Fauna Permit Unit](#) per year, one at the end of financial year and the other at the end of February

## Ongoing commitment to training by permit holders

A significant level of expertise/knowledge (e.g. keeping, handling and first aid) is required to keep venomous snakes. Permit holders must fully understand the risks and take steps to instigate all reasonable measures to mitigate those risks. DEWNR encourages all permit holders to maintain an ongoing commitment to regular training updates. DEWNR may require applicants, seeking renewal of permit, to provide documented evidence of recent, accredited training that they have undertaken.

## Permit endorsements

For specialist permits, there is a graded system based on the applicant's experience in both husbandry and handling of those venomous snakes.

- Endorsement of permits will commence with the lowest category unless the applicant can provide evidence to support extensive knowledge and experience in the husbandry of a higher level species.
- Endorsement to the next level is subject to further application after a minimum of 12 months experience in the husbandry and keeping of venomous snakes has been gained (at a the lower level endorsement).

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Permit type	Endorsement category	Species
Keep and Sell (Specialist)	1	Easily kept or reasonably placid dangerous snakes namely <i>Rhinoplocephalus nigrescens</i> (Small-eyed Snake), <i>Denisonia maculata</i> (Ornamental Snake), <i>Suta suta</i> (Curl Snake), <i>Pseudechis porphyriacus</i> and <i>Pseudechis guttatus</i> (Red-bellied Black Snake and Spotted Black Snake) and all species of <i>Demansia</i> (Whip Snakes)
Keep and Sell (Specialist)	2	Very difficult to keep and or highly venomous snakes or species considered likely to cause a severe or life threatening bite, namely all species of <i>Pseudechis</i> , except <i>P. porphyriacus</i> and <i>P. guttatus</i> ; all species of <i>Acanthophis</i> (Death Adder), <i>Notechis</i> (Tiger Snakes), <i>Pseudonaja</i> (Brown Snakes), <i>Austrelaps</i> (Copperheads) and <i>Hoplocephalus</i> (Broad-headed Snakes).
Keep and Sell (Specialist)	3	Extremely venomous snakes including all species of <i>Oxyuranus</i> (Taipans) and <i>Tropidechis carinatus</i> (Rough Scaled Snake).

## Consultation regrading endorsement categories

DEWNR may from time to time review species within each endorsement category. Proposal(s) to change categories are expected to outline:

- (a) Husbandry requirements; and
- (b) Venomous nature.

Proposals to re-categorise species will be circulated by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources to the South Australian Museum and the South Australian Herpetology Group and other appropriate Stakeholders, for their input and advice. If there is a rational case for change, regrading may occur.

## Facilities for Keeping Venomous Snakes

Premises may be inspected by DEWNR to evaluate suitability prior to any permit being granted. Photographs, plans, specifications of enclosures and premises may be required. The Department must be satisfied that the applicant has the appropriate facilities, ability, knowledge and experience to safely and properly care for venomous snakes.

## Permit holders must ensure that they:

- (a) Address all animal welfare considerations in respect of keeping snakes in captivity (see Regulation 18 of the *National Parks and Wildlife (Wildlife) Regulations 2001* regarding standards for the keeping of protected animals below).
- (b) Take all reasonable steps to prevent the escape or theft of snakes from an appropriately secure environment.

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## Human Safety

Permit holders must ensure that they minimise the possibility of snake bite either to themselves or any other person. They must possess suitable first aid equipment for the treatment of snake bite on site where venomous snakes are being held or caught at all times.

It is recommended that Permit holders have a written emergency response plan in place which includes procedures for managing any incident involving snake bite (self or others) and snake escape.

## Security and access

It is a minimum requirement that all venomous snakes shall be kept in either lockable, escape proof containers or in containers within a lockable and sealed room which prevents unauthorised entry and/or tampering with cages (vivariums) and the escape of snakes.

Access to venomous snakes must be limited to persons authorised by the permit holder (e.g. an employee who has undertaken a recognised course in venomous snake handling) or to persons holding permits with the same endorsement. Anyone who has not undertaken a recognised course in venomous snake handling/interaction must not, under any circumstances, handle any venomous snakes.

## Permit Application Fee

A regulated application fee, as per section 53(1)(d) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* will apply to all applications to keep venomous snakes.

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## Other relevant documents

- DEWNR's Venomous Snake Intervention (Snake Catching) Policy and Procedure
- DEWNR's General Guidelines for the Management of Protected Wildlife in Captivity in South Australia.
- DEWNR: Snake Safety Fact Sheet:  
[www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/Plants\\_Animals/Living\\_with\\_wildlife/Snakes](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/Plants_Animals/Living_with_wildlife/Snakes)
- DEWNR Safe Work Practice – Outdoor Activity: Snake Handling (Venomous and Non-Venomous)
- DFW Safe Work Practice – Emergency Management: Snakes and Snake Bite Procedure.

## Contact

DEWNR Fauna Permit Unit, telephone (08) 8124 4930 or email: [dewnrfaunapermitsunit@sa.gov.au](mailto:dewnrfaunapermitsunit@sa.gov.au)

Tim Goodes

GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Strategy and Advice

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