

Watch for venomous snakes when afield

September 23 2015, by Steve Byrns



AgriLife Extension wildlife expert advises caution afield so hunters avoid the fate of this hapless cow recovering from an apparent snakebite. Credit: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Steve Byrns

With dove season in full-swing and bow season for deer just around the corner, hunters should be aware of their surroundings, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service wildlife specialist.

"While folks stock up on shells, buy their licenses, prepare for their trips and head afield, they may be forgetting one critical component of a successful hunting trip: safety," said Dr. John Tomecek of San Angelo.

"While we normally think of hunter safety as pertaining to safe practices while shooting, handling a firearm, and knowing what is beyond your target, there is one component, especially during dove season, that is often overlooked and that's venomous snakes."

Tomecek said hot weather, a mainstay of the dove and early [deer](#) seasons across Texas, means snakes are still very active. Optimum spring growing conditions mean there is plenty of tall vegetation across fields and pastures this fall to hide the reptiles.

"Most cropped fields favored by dove [hunters](#) have had little human activity for months, making them preferable for snakes to live in," he said. "Large numbers of bird hunters in the field, especially exuberant young hunters may unintentionally run afoul of our serpentine friends."

Tomecek said there are some simple, common-sense precautions to remaining snake-safe in the field. First, when walking in tall vegetation,

keep an eye on where you are about to step. Additionally, when crossing open ground, watch your path as you approach as snakes may be basking in the open.

"While the hunter focuses on the birds flying overhead, they may miss the critters at their feet," Tomecek said. "Second, when retrieving birds or empty hulls, look before you reach. Snakes may be under nearby vegetation and easily frightened, which may result in a strike. These hiding places also include large clumps of prickly pear cactus, under which snakes often lie.

"And finally, to prepare for a safe hunting trip, know the locations of nearby hospitals and bring a snake-bite kit with your other first-aid supplies in the field. If you or a hunting partner is bitten, remain calm and attempt to identify the type of snake. This will help medical professionals know what antivenom to administer.

"So have fun, but remember, safety is a key element of an enjoyable hunt."

Provided by Texas A&M University

Citation: Watch for venomous snakes when afield (2015, September 23) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-09-venomous-snakes-afield.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.