

Snakes in Melbourne: Winter weather

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Winter weather not driving away tiger, lowland copperhead snakes

We're told to be wary of snakes in summer, but the threat in northeastern fringe suburbs is not over despite the cold weather. Here's the types to look for, and how to stop them invading your home.

Anthony Piovesan, Diamond ValleySubscriber only | June 5, 2019 6:00am



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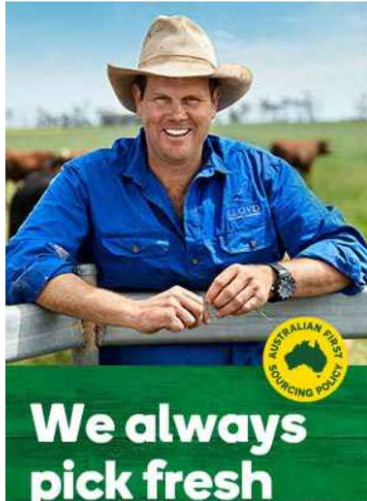
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Fearless snake hunter Mark Pelley has been keeping people and pets safe by catching the reptiles across Melbourne's northeast for seven years. Picture: Stuart Milligan

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After surviving a "snake invasion" in summer, families across Melbourne's northeast are encountering another serpent problem — the venomous offspring.

Mark Pelley, widely known as [the Snake Hunter](#), caught 558 serpents across the Diamond Valley last summer, well above the previous season's tally of 379.


He said it was [the region's "worst" summer](#) on record.

And with Melbourne now in the grip of winter, Mr Pelley said two types of baby snakes thrived in the cooler conditions.

The veteran snake catcher said many families were unearthing the small reptiles in shoes, bathtubs, beneath piles of firewood and behind rubbish bins.

"Two of the most common snake species I am finding are the tiger and lowland copperhead snakes and the scary thing is they both can thrive in the cold," he said.

"I am finding them a lot in homes at this time of year — they're born in early



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“Two of the most common snake species I am finding are the tiger and lowland copperhead snakes and the scary thing is they both can thrive in the cold,” he said.


“I am finding them a lot in homes at this time of year — they’re born in early autumn and still haven’t wised up that homes are not their natural environment so they tend to hang around.”

Mr Pelley said their venom was as strong as an adults, despite being a lot smaller.



A one-year-old tiger snake, whose venom can still be as deadly as a fully grown adult.

“A few tiny drops of their venom could kill and can be extremely dangerous to both humans and dogs,” he said.



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“In the winter you get more incidents where people accidentally stumble across them (snakes) rather than just spot them.

“For example in summer you’ll typically see snakes slithering across your driveway or in your backyard, but this season are more accidental cases where snakes are seen after you move something or when you surprise them.”

Mr Pelley said he was shocked at the number of snakes he found across the Diamond Valley in summer, but wasn't surprised.



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Guns found in living room of family home



Mark Pelley caught a record 558 snakes across the Diamond Valley region last summer.

"Snake numbers are increasing every year and this summer has by far been a record for Melbourne's northeast," he said.

"Unfortunately there isn't a solution — expanding human population means an increased number of homes being built.

"With that comes more rubbish which then attracts more snakes."



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Mr Pelley said all snakes would be released into the wild within 5km of where they were caught.


But the professional snake hunter was “struggling” to meet that requirement due to enormous growth in peri-urban areas.

“If you think about it, 5km of Greensborough is still in an urban area and where snakes can harm people,” Mr Pelley said.

“I do meet that requirement, but I am struggling more and more as this area continues to grow.”

HOW TO SNAKE-PROOF YOUR HOME

- 1. Get rid of any rubbish:** Rodents are attracted to rubbish and snakes love rodents. Mr Pelley recommended rubbish be put straight into the bin, and never left on the floor.
- 2. Maintain your garden:** Mr Pelley said snakes loved messy and unkept gardens — it provided a perfect home for them. He advised homeowners to keep gardens tidy at all times, ensuring people could see as much ground as possible.
- 3. Don't bother with snake-proof fencing:** Mr Pelley advised homeowners against this because snakes slithered over the top of them anyway. He said baby snakes could still crawl through these fences. He also said rodents liked to dig beneath



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4. Snake repellents are useless: They emit a pulsing vibration into the surrounding soil, which the snake is then meant to perceive as a source of danger and avoid. But Mr Pelley said they were ineffective. "If they did work I would sell them myself," he said. "Snakes get around with their excellent sense of sight and smell — I wouldn't call them deaf, but snakes notoriously have poor hearing so they normally can't feel or hear these vibrations."
5. Awareness: "This is the big one," Mr Pelley warned. "Have a clean backyard, look before you move anything outside and just be aware that snakes can be anywhere at anytime."





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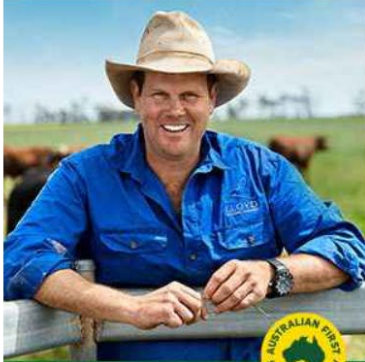
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