

# DOGS AND SNAKEBITE!

## EASTERN MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKES

Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnakes live in Oakland County. They are the only venomous snake in Michigan. Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnakes are protected and listed as a species of special concern. Well camouflaged and rare, they often go unseen. Rattlesnakes lie motionless, unless sensing they are in danger, and then may rattle (buzz) a warning when approached. If given a chance, a Massasauga will retreat. They often seek a secluded refuge after the disturbance has passed. Conflicts are easily avoided by leaving snakes alone.

Dogs tend to investigate new sights and sounds. Some dogs, when faced with something unusual, will stand their ground at a safe distance and bark while other breeds run in to challenge, grab or attempt to kill the snake. This latter behavior puts dogs at risk of being bitten by the normally shy and secretive Eastern Massasauga. Dog owners should be aware of the presence of rattlesnakes while visiting the parks.

**OAKLAND  
COUNTY PARKS**  
OaklandCountyParks.com

## BITES

occur to the leg, but more frequently to the face as dogs use their nose to investigate their surroundings. If the dog is bitten on the head, the situation is more serious due to the speed with which the venom could impair the dog's respiratory functions. Some veterinarians suggest an oral administration of BENADRYL if swelling causes tracheal obstruction. Pet owners should consult with their veterinarians regarding treatment.

### If your dog surprises a rattlesnake and is bitten:

- Look for swelling, pain, or signs of discomfort.
- Massasauga bites are distinguished from non-venomous snake bites by 1-2 puncture wounds, often not evident due to fur.
- Try to identify the snake, but avoid getting bitten yourself.
- Limit movement as much as possible—do not let the dog walk. If possible, keep the bitten area below the heart level. Do not apply tourniquets, ice or suction to treat the wound.
- Take your pet **IMMEDIATELY** to a veterinarian.
- Do not delay seeking treatment, due to time of night, holidays or weekends. With immediate treatment, few deaths have occurred.
- Report all bites to park authorities.

## Venomous

snakes do not always inject venom when they strike, and your vet must first establish if your pet has been envenomated. Next the vet must establish the degree of envenomation. In mild cases, only pain killers may be given. In serious cases, fluid therapy is required to restore blood pressure and epinephrine or corticosteroids and antihistamines are injected to treat allergic reaction and swelling. Nose and head bites can be dangerous because swelling may cut off nasal or tracheal air passages.

Antivenom is seldom administered to dogs because the cost is prohibitive, except in very serious cases. There is a good chance of recovery without the administration of antivenom and allergic reactions to antivenom have occurred. If you are not sure if your dog was bitten by a venomous snake, look for signs of severe asymmetrical swelling or pain which may occur up to two hours later.

## Prevention is the best policy:

- While walking, control your dog with a 6-foot leash.
- Do not allow your dog to explore holes in the ground or dig under logs or other natural objects.
- Stay on the trails and be alert. Look ahead and scan your surroundings.
- If you see or hear a rattlesnake, keep your pet at your side. Locate the snake and move away.
- Learn to identify local snakes in your area. Visit the Wint Nature Center at Independence Oaks County Park near Clarkston for classes and information. Visit [OaklandCountyParks.com](http://OaklandCountyParks.com) for phone numbers and locations.



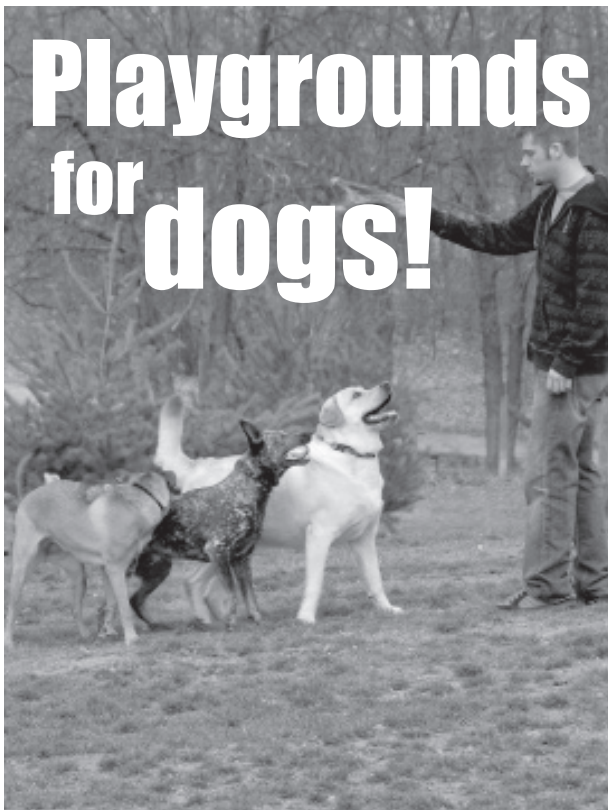
### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Dr. Hilary Turnbull, D.V.M. (Georgian Animal Hospital, Parry Sound) reviewed this article and provided comments on veterinary care of dogs. Reprinted with revisions with permission from Bob Johnson, Curator of Amphibians and Reptiles of the Toronto Zoo. Also, a special thank you to the local emergency care facilities listed.

### Emergency Vet Contacts:

Remember that the quick recovery of your family pet from venomous snakebite depends on prompt veterinary treatment. Go to your vet or go immediately to these emergency veterinary care facilities:

- **Animal Emergency Center**  
Rochester 248-651-1788  
265 East Second Street –  
open evenings, weekends and holidays  
Carries antivenom
- **Animal Emergency Center**  
Novi 248-348-1788  
24255 Novi Road –  
open 24 hours/seven days, including holidays  
Carries antivenom
- **Oakland Veterinary Referral Service**  
Bloomfield Hills 248-334-6877  
1400 South Telegraph Road –  
Open 24 hours/seven days, including holidays  
Carries antivenom



### Lyon Oaks – 13 acres

Pontiac Trail, Lyon Twp.  
Features a small dog area, drinking water, benches, shelter, picnic tables and field training area.

### Orion Oaks – 24 acres

Joslyn Road; Orion Twp.  
Offers a small dog area, drinking water, modern restrooms, field training area, two trails and access to Lake Sixteen for dogs to swim

### Red Oaks – 5.2 acres

Dequindre Road, adjacent to Red Oaks Waterpark; Madison Heights  
Includes a shelter and paved parking lot.



#### For the safety of all dogs and visitors, please note:

- ❁ The Oakland County Parks rules require all dogs to be on a 6’ leash. The exceptions are the Lyon Oaks, Orion Oaks and Red Oaks Dog Parks enclosures. Dogs must be leashed until inside the Dog Park.
- ❁ Dogs must have current license, up-to-date vaccinations, respond to voice command and visual observation. No dogs under four months.
- ❁ Dogs must be accompanied by an adult (age 18 or older) at all times, even inside the enclosure.
- ❁ Owners are responsible for pets at all times. Those creating problems will be asked to leave. Off-leash does not mean out of control.
- ❁ In compliance with Michigan Penal Code 750.66, all dog bites must be reported and certain information recorded. See park signage for details.
- ❁ Dogs in heat may not enter the park.
- ❁ Please clean up pet waste. Bags supplied by **PET SUPPLIES "PLUS"**
- ❁ Lake access is for dogs only. (Orion Oaks)

OCP annual or daily vehicle permit is required. Passes are available online at [DestinationOakland.com](http://DestinationOakland.com) and at many locations throughout the county, including:

- Bass Pro Outdoor World, Auburn Hills–248.209.4200
- Lyon Oaks Nature Center–248.437.7345
- Lyon Township–248.437.2240
- Oakland County Parks–248.858.0906
- Orion Township Hall–248.391.0304
- Red Oaks Golf Course (in season)–248.541.5030
- City of Madison Heights offices–248.588.1200



Call 1-888-OCPARKS to report any problems.