



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

---

**For Immediate Release**  
April 9, 2009

Contact: 850-245-4111

## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WARNS OF HEALTH RISKS FROM DISPLACED ANIMALS**

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Health advises Florida residents and visitors to protect themselves against injury from animals that may become displaced because of flooding and storms.

### **How to Prevent a Snake Bite**

- Be aware of snakes that may be swimming in the water to get to higher ground and those that may be hiding under debris or other objects.
- If you see a snake, back away from it slowly and do not touch it.

### **Signs of a Snake Bite**

Pay attention to signs that indicate you may have a snake bite. If you have to walk in high water, you may or may not feel a bite. The signs and symptoms may include:

- A pair of puncture marks at the wound
- Redness and swelling around the bite
- Severe pain at the site of the bite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Labored breathing (in extreme cases, breathing may stop altogether)
- Disturbed vision
- Increased salivation and sweating
- Numbness or tingling around your face and/or limbs

### **What to Do**

- Try to see the color and shape of the snake, which can help with treatment of the snake bite.
- Keep the bitten person still and calm. This can slow down the spread of venom if the snake is poisonous. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.
- Dial 911 or call local Emergency Medical Services.
- Apply first aid if you cannot get the person to the hospital right away.
  - Lay or sit the person down with the bite below the level of the heart.
  - Tell him/her to stay calm and still.
  - Cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing.

### **What NOT To Do**

- Do not pick up the snake or try to trap it (this may put you or someone else at risk for a bite).
- Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Do not slash the wound with a knife.

-more-



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

---

## Displaced Animals/Page 2

- Do not suck out the venom.
- Do not apply ice or immerse the wound in water.
- Do not drink alcohol as a pain killer.
- Do not drink caffeinated beverages.

### **How to Prevent Fire Ant Stings and Bites**

- Anyone with a history of severe allergic reactions to insect bites or stings should discuss their allergy with their primary health care provider who may recommend carrying an epinephrine auto injector (EpiPen). We recommend you also wear a medical identification bracelet or necklace stating their allergy.
- During flooding conditions, colonies of fire ants are capable of floating in clusters or “rafts,” posing a threat to anything encountering them.
- Colonies can also be formed under rocks, wood or other debris on the ground, edges of bodies of water, trash cans and areas with spilled food or sugary drinks.
- Expect indoor invasions. Fire ants can easily enter structures through tiny cracks and crevices after a flood. Occasionally, entire colonies will migrate into structures and nest in wall voids, children’s or immobile person’s beds.
- Do not disturb or stand on or near ant mounds.
- Be careful when lifting items (including animal carcasses) off the ground, as they may be covered in ants.
- Fire ants may also be found on trees or in water, so always look over the area before starting to work.

### **First Aid for Fire Ant Bites**

- Rub off ants briskly, as they will attach to the skin with their jaws.
- Antihistamines may help.
  - Follow directions on packaging.
  - Drowsiness may occur.
- Seek immediate medical attention at an emergency medical facility immediately if a sting causes severe chest pain, nausea, severe sweating, loss of breath, serious swelling, or slurred speech.



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

---

-more-

Displaced Animals/Page 3

### **Preventing Rodent Infestations:**

- Surviving rodents often relocate to new areas in search of food, water and shelter.
- Removing food sources, water and items that provide shelter for rodents is the best way to prevent contact with rodents
- Dispose of garbage on a frequent and regular basis inside and outside of the home.
- Thoroughly clean areas with signs of rodent activity to reduce the likelihood of exposure to germs and diseases.
- For information on rodent control and diseases please visit:  
[http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/Zoonoses/Rodent\\_Zoonoses.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/Zoonoses/Rodent_Zoonoses.html)

###