

Venomous Spiders and Snakes in Oklahoma: What Residents Should Know

Oklahoma's natural beauty—ranging from forested hills and rocky outcrops to river valleys and prairie grasslands—provides rich habitats for all kinds of wildlife. Among them are a handful of spiders and snakes that are venomous, and while encounters are generally rare, it is important to understand which species to avoid and how to stay safe.

Venomous Spiders in Oklahoma

Only a few of Oklahoma's spiders are venomous to humans, but the ones that are deserve caution:

- **Black Widow:**

Found in dark, secluded spaces like woodpiles or sheds, this spider has a shiny black body and a red hourglass marking on its abdomen. Its venom is neurotoxic and can cause muscle cramps, nausea, and sweating. Fortunately, fatalities are exceptionally rare with prompt treatment.

- **Brown Recluse:**

Aptly named, the brown recluse is shy and prefers hidden areas like closets or under furniture. It's identified by a violin-shaped marking on its back. Its bite can lead to tissue damage and, in rare cases, serious complications.

<https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/spiders-brown-recluse-black-widow-and-other-common-spiders.html>

Venomous Snakes in Oklahoma

Oklahoma is home to seven species of venomous snakes, most of which are pit vipers. They use heat-sensing pits near their eyes to detect prey and threats:

- **Copperhead:**

With a distinctive hourglass pattern, copperheads are well-camouflaged in forested and rocky habitats. Though bites are rarely fatal, they can be extremely painful.

- **Cottonmouth:**

Also known as the water moccasin, this semi-aquatic snake is known for its defensive behavior - showing the white interior of its mouth as a warning. Its venom affects blood and tissue.

- **Timber Rattlesnake & Western Diamondback Rattlesnake:**

These large, heavy-bodied rattlesnakes prefer wooded or rocky areas. Their venom is hemotoxic and can cause serious damage if untreated.

- **Western Pygmy Rattlesnake:**

A smaller species with a high-pitched rattle, its bite is less severe but still requires medical evaluation.

<https://extension.okstate.edu/programs/pest-and-hazard-management/snakes/how-to-id-a-venomous-snake.html>

<https://extension.okstate.edu/programs/pest-and-hazard-management/snakes/>

Staying Safe Outdoors

Most spiders and snakes want nothing to do with people. Still, simple precautions can go a long way:

- Shake out shoes, clothing, and towels before use.
- Wear boots and gloves when gardening or exploring overgrown areas.
- Never reach blindly into holes, logs, or crevices.
- Do not attempt to handle or kill venomous animals as many bites occur during such attempts.

In Case of a Bite

If bitten, remain calm and seek medical attention immediately. Take a photo of the animal if it is safe to do so as this can help doctors identify the right treatment.

With a little awareness and preparation, Oklahomans can safely coexist with the state's slithery and eight-legged residents.