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Vets warn about snakes

Veterinarians at Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care are warning dog owners to be on the lookout for rattlesnakes, saying they have treated several dogs with serious snakebites in the past three weeks.

"The seriousness of a snake bite depends on the species of the snake, the size of the dog and the amount of venom injected," said Frank Utchen, a veterinarian at Bishop Ranch. "Most dogs can be treated, but not without using a costly drug called Antivenin." About four hours after the bite, antivenin is of minimal use, so quick action is important.

Symptoms of snake bites include one or two puncture wounds, acute swelling, bleeding and pain. Most bites occur on the face or legs. If a bite is in the leg, carry the pet to reduce blood flow and the spread of venom. For a bite on the head, remove restrictive collars. Do not apply ice to the area, use a tourniquet, or try to suck or cut the wound.