The Common European Adder is fairly widespread in the UK. It is found in woodland areas, moors, heathland, meadows, coastal dunes, hedgerows, and the banks of streams, lakes and ponds. The individual appearance of adders is variable but they can be identified by the dark V or X shape on the back of the head. Most adders also have a zigzag pattern on their back which runs all the way along the body as far as the tail. Adders are quite timid in nature and will not usually bite unless they feel threatened or cornered.

Dogs are often victims of adder bites when a dog is out on a walk and sticks their nose into areas where snakes are basking in the sun. Dogs are frequently bitten on the face and limbs but bites can occur on any part of the body. Most snake bites tend to occur between March and October when the snakes are more active due to the warm weather.

The severity of signs from an adder bite is variable and depends upon where the dog is bitten, the size of the dog and how long the adder has been out of hibernation (they have larger amounts of venom stored when they’ve just come out of hibernation).

Most adder bites result in immediate pain, inflammation, tingling and swelling within 30 minutes of being bitten. Your dog may become restless or depressed, as well as vomiting and collapsing. The most effective treatment for adder bites is anti-venom but supportive treatment such as anti-inflammatory drugs, a drip and antibiotics may be given prior to administering anti-venom. Keep your dog well hydrated and as calm as possible prior to seeking veterinary treatment.

Adder bites are not often fatal but if your pet has been bitten by an adder (or you suspect that it may have been) you should seek prompt veterinary attention. Call us on 01202 484466.

Do not attempt first aid measures such as sucking out the venom or applying a tourniquet—these procedures are ineffective and may even cause further harm to your pet!