

Family Health

By CLAY WILLIAMS

Probably no creature on earth, great or small, stikes more fear in mankind - often out of proportion to actual danger - than does the snake.

Folklore about the snake's ill-temper and aggressiveness are recounted whenever and wherever the subject comes up. You'll hear that people have been chased by a poisonous snake when, actually, poisonous snakes never move toward anyone. They may stand their ground, but never attack. To some, every snake they see is poisonous. Fact is, nine out of ten snakes seen in North Carolina are harmless. How many items have you heard that a snake's mate is always in the same area? Truth is, if one species of snake is in a given area, other specimens of the same species will also be present.

The possibility of coming upon a snake actually keeps many people from enjoying the pleasures of out-of-door life. Pity. There is probably more danger of drowning, insect stings, falling, or having an auto accident than there is from encountering a poisonous snake. Only about 10 people die of snake bite each year in the United States. Almost all these deaths occur in Texas, Florida and Georgia - the home of the Diamondback rattler. Snake bite deaths are quite rare in North Carolina.

The cottonmouth moccasin (water moccasin) is found in plentiful supply in the Eastern part of North Carolina. Still, people will swear any snake in or close to a river, swamp, or pond anywhere in the state is a Cottonmouth. Cottonmouth bites are rare because close encounter is unlikely in its natural habitat. Contrary to popular belief, the Cottonmouth can bite under water, but hardly ever has to. It is agile and usually can evade waders and swimmers. A Cottonmouth will never swim out of the water and attack a person. If you come upon a thick-bodied snake near water in Eastern North Carolina who immediately turns and faces you with its mouth wide open, you may consider it a Cottonmouth. All harmless water snakes keep their mouths closed except at the instant they strike. Then it will beat a hasty retreat.

The most common rattlesnake found in North Carolina is the Timber (sometimes called Canebreak) rattler. It can be found any place in the state but usually in the deeper wooded areas, so it is not commonly seen by humans. It is a mild-mannered snake that strikes only when stepped upon or narrowly missed. It is not nearly as ill-tempered as the Cottonmouth. The Timber rattler's venom, according to Dr. Joseph H. Talley, a Grover, North Carolina, family physician, is equal in strength and quantity to that of the Cottonmouth.

The tiny Pigmey rattler is a mean little rascal, but so small it is not a threat to life. Bites occur most commonly among vegetable pickers reaching close to the ground. Dr. Talley said a bite sometimes causes the loss or deformity of a finger, but rarely kills anyone.

The Eastern Diamondback rattler is the one snake in North Carolina that could pose a real threat to life; but, fortunately, it is seldom seen except in the southeast corner of the state. It is large, nervous, ill-tempered and will strike at anything within range. They account for almost 100 percent of snakebite deaths in this country.

By far the most common poisonous snake in North Carolina is the Copperhead (Highland moccasin). Fortunately, it is the least dangerous of all poisonous snakes. Deaths from Copperhead bites are almost unheard of. Dr. Talley pointed out that a swollen limb is about all one can expect from a Copperhead bite. It is a mild-mannered snake and nearly has to be stepped on to make it bite. You hear of a lot of Copperhead bites because it can be found all over - even in residential areas of cities. The Copperhead can be identified by its bow-tie shaped markings - brown, white and black, or various shades of those colors.

In a future column, I'll discuss how to avoid snake bite, habitats and first aid in case you are unfortunate enough to be bitten by a poisonous snake. (A service of the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians.)

Your Week Ahead Horoscope

than instant gain.

Forecast Period: 8/8-8/14/82

This is not the time to go in debt. Be Mar. 21-Apr. 19 alert to long term possibilities rather

TAURUS

Apr. 20-May 20

GEMINI

May 21-June 20 CANCER

June 21-July 22

July 23-Aug. 22

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sept. 22

LIBRA Sept. 23-Oct. 22

SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21 CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19 AQUARIUS

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Jan. 20-Feb. 18 PISCES

thanks to the super abundant energy flowing around you. Summertime activities bring much contact with the young ones. The give and take can be a learning experience.

Shift with the times and follow the new

trends. A flexible approach is called

Much work is accomplished this week

Things are not dull at home. You just get one thing running well and something else lets go. Avoid trouble with neighbors or fam-

ily. Be discriminating when changing plans. Make right choices. Dynamic personal action is directed

toward acquisition of possessions. Be careful of the toes you might trod on. Avoid impulsive actions. Slow the pace a little, and keep your disposition

on an even keel. Watch temper Take time to gather your energies. The coming weeks will be very demanding on you physically and mentally.

Associates spur you to action in organizational matters and you find yourself in a leadership role. Professional matters lend a bit of ex-

citement to life. You will realize your objectives. Enjoy the trip. Concentrate on working out ideas for

improving your station in life. Forget those feelings of self pity.