

Animal Facts:

Cobras and Vipers

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Two kinds of poisonous snake are dangerous to humans - vipers and elapids such as cobras and mambas.



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Elapids have their venom (poison) in short front fangs. A viper's fangs are so long that they usually have to be folded away.



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A hamadryad cobra of Southeast Asia is the world's largest poisonous snake, growing to over 5 m.



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In India, cobras kill more than 7,000 people every year. The bite of a king cobra can kill an elephant in 4 hours. The marine cobra lives in the sea and its venom is 100 times more deadly.



Snake charmers use the spectacled cobra, playing to it so that it follows the pipe as if about to strike - but the snake's fangs have been removed to make it safe.



A spitting cobra squirts venom into its attacker's eyes, and is accurate at 2 m or more. The venom is not deadly, but it blinds the victim and is very painful.



The black mamba of Africa can race along at 25 km/h with its head raised and its tongue flickering.



A viper's venom kills its victims by making their blood clot. Viper venom has been used to treat haemophiliacs (people whose blood does not clot well).



The pit vipers of the Americas hunt their warm blooded victims using heat sensitive pits on the side of their heads.



Fer de lance
snakes have 60
to 80 babies,
each of which
is deadly
poisonous.

