



The Safety Corner

From the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned 11 May 2007



Venomous and Dangerous Animals of the Desert

This issue of the Safety Corner highlights lessons and observations about dangerous insects and animals found in desert areas such as those encountered in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East.

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From the Director: In every issue of the Safety Corner, we strive to provide up-to-date and relevant safety information that will be useful in combat operations, garrison environments, or during off-duty time. Being aware of one's surroundings is a skill Marines and Sailors are trained to maintain and consistently expand upon. However, dangers around you do not always flash warning signs and some of the biggest dangers come in camouflaged packages.

With the rising temperatures, "creepy crawlers" move in and share our living spaces, as we inhabit theirs. Marines and Sailors should be aware of hazards related to bites and stings by venomous insects and animals and how to safely most appropriately deal with them.

So, if you are planning a "trip to an exotic or remote location", be alert for snakes and other dangerous wildlife when you enter habitats that they might call home.

Log on to www.mccll.usmc.mil to download previous editions of the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned Safety Corner as well as our Monthly Newsletters. I look forward to your comments, observations, and concerns.

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VENOMOUS ANIMALS: Snakes, bees, wasps, hornets, ants, spiders, centipedes, and scorpions.

COUNTERMEASURES:

- Avoid all venomous animals
- Assume ALL snakes are poisonous
- Do not attempt to handle or capture any snakes or insects
- Shake out clothes, shoes, and bedding before use
- Wear foot protection at all times (no barefeet), keep boots bloused, use insect repellent
- Look carefully before you reach into dark areas or piles of material that haven't been moved for a while
- [Click here to view bugs that bite video from MNF-I](#)



Use the [Naval Environmental and Preventive Medicine http://nepmu6.med.navy.mil/Entomology/Entomology.html](http://nepmu6.med.navy.mil/Entomology/Entomology.html) website to glean best practice ideas to enhance your command entomology safety awareness program.



Dangerous Feral Dogs are Prevalent in Iraq

Feral dogs are also known as wild or free-ranging dogs.

They differ markedly from domestic dogs in their behavior toward people and may attack without provocation. Further, these dogs have been known to eat their victims unlike domestic dogs. They often travel in packs and, like wolves, may have rendezvous sites and dens. They are usually adept predators since their very existence demands the ability to capture and kill their food.

Key Fact: Feral dogs usually do not have a fear of humans, and many will display highly aggressive behavior during encounters with people and may readily attack without fear.

The observations and recommendations contained in The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) Safety Corner represent the considered judgment of Marines who have identified safety issues in their units. The purpose of this newsletter is to apprise other Marines of these safety recommendations and to encourage them to enter their own lessons into the Marine Corps Lessons Management System (LMS).



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Guidelines for cleaning Ammunition Supply Points (ASP), warehouses, and buildings contaminated with bat guano and pigeon droppings.

1. Droppings from pigeons and other bird species may contain pathogens that can cause serious illness (cryptococcosis, psittacosis, histoplasmosis, etc.) when not cleaned using the proper precautions.
2. Cleaning of warehouses should be performed as necessary to prevent build-up of pigeon droppings and should consist of the following engineering and PPE precautions:
 - a. Wherever possible, droppings should be thoroughly wetted down to prevent aerosolization of the pathogens prior to cleaning. Using a solution of one part household bleach to ten parts water is recommended to disinfect while wetting.
 - b. Cleaning personnel must wear R95/N95 protective respirator/dust masks to prevent inhalation of aerosolized pathogens.
 - c. Measures should be taken to exclude the birds from roosting in workspaces (cammi netting along the ceiling, closing means of access, etc.).

Bat and Pigeon Guano

Histoplasmosis is an airborne fungus disease that can grow in pigeon and bat droppings (guano). Guano must have contact with moist soil, which is normally not present in a dry attic environment.

Human inhalation is usually the result of stirring up dust that contains contaminated fungus spores, therefore it is not recommended to clean up guano unless there is a serious odor or health problem. Guano should only be cleaned up by personnel wearing the proper safety equipment.

Fact: Bats are the only flying mammal in the world and are very beneficial in that they can eat over 500 flying insects per hour all night long. Like other mammals, a very small percentage of bats contract rabies. Exposure to the rabies virus is remote if contact with bats is avoided and pets are properly vaccinated.



**DANGEROUS SCORPIONS
OF IRAQ**



There are four dangerous scorpions in Iraq (shown below) that have highly toxic venom and should be avoided if you encounter them. In general, scorpions with slim, narrow pincers have more toxic venom. Scorpion stings can cause severe pain at the bite wound, swelling, rashes, and hemorrhagic spots. These symptoms can progress to fever, convulsions, increased heart rate and blood pressure, and coma. Death can occur from heart attack or respiratory failure. Some stings can lead to necrosis, or tissue death.

A scorpion sting after 1 week



Death Stalker Scorpion



Black Scorpion



Fat Tailed Scorpion



Hemiscorpius lepturus



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Scorpions Facts

Scorpions are nocturnal animals, which means they come out at night forage for prey. They hunt for spiders, centipedes, insects and other scorpions. Sometimes they prey on small lizards, snakes and mice. During the day they hide under rocks, in crevices, under objects, and they are most often encountered outdoors under loose debris.

They glow green or blue under UV (blacklight).

Scorpions carry their young on their backs.

Scorpions have to shed their skin several times in their life and are soft and pale after they shed until their skin hardens.



Photo: Rick C. West



Camel Spider

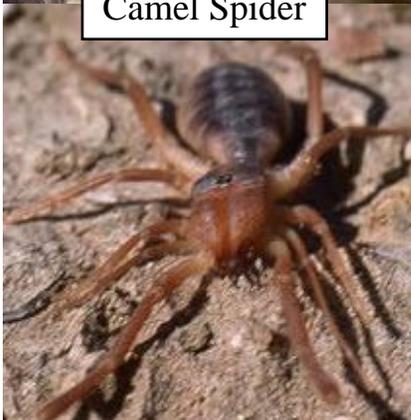
Camel Spiders The Myths:

1. Camel spiders can move at speeds over 30 mph, screaming while they run.
2. Camel spiders can be as large as a frisbee.
3. Camel spiders venom is an anesthetic that numbs their prey.
4. Camel spiders can jump three feet high.
5. Camel spiders get their name because they eat the stomachs of camels.

Camel spiders: urban legend at work

Camel Spiders The Facts

1. Camel spiders top speed - 10 mph.
 2. Size: Up to 6 inches
 3. They have no venom.
 4. They don't jump.
 5. Called camel spiders because they live in the desert.
- They actually aren't spiders at all, they're solifugids. Along with spiders, they are members of the class Arachnida.



Soldier in Iraq bitten by a Camel Spider. Yes, they can bite. If they do, there is always the possibility of infection.

Where can you get more information on solifugids?

Contact the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM), Entomological Sciences Program, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland 21010-5403: DSN 584-3613, CM (410) 436-3613: FAX – 2037; <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/ento>.



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SNAKES AND OTHER DANGEROUS ANIMALS



Horned Viper



Levantine Viper:



Sand Viper



Saw-Scaled Viper



Rock Viper



Desert Black Snake

Snake Bite Countermeasures

Do not handle or disturb snakes!
 Assume that any snake you encounter is venomous.
 Avoid walking outside in open-toed shoes.
 Shake out clothes, shoes, and bedding before use
 Wear foot protection at all times (no barefeet)
 Be alert in areas where snakes may be hiding or sunning.

Snake Bite First Aid

-Avoid panic! Immobilize bite site, don't try to suck venom out.
 -Seek medical attention immediately. Antivenom treatment is available in the theater.
 -Record appearance of the snake.
 -Retain snake **if possible**.



Do not do this!

And use this!



Otherwise Expect this!



Information provided by CSSG -15 Preventive Medicine Unit

Rabies and Feral Dogs



Rabies can be a lethal disease!

Contracted by animal bites or through saliva contacting broken skin or mucous membranes (i.e. a lick on a cut or scratch)

Stray/feral animals are vectors for human infection. Any bite or scratch must be evaluated by a physician.

The animal population in Iraq is not routinely vaccinated so ALL dogs except Military Working Dogs should be considered contagious.

If you are unsure of what the animal was that bit you – always assume it is high risk and get it **TREATED** by medical.

Key fact: rabies is widespread in Iraq.

Because feral dogs are NOT a natural and desired part of the ecosystem, please report all encounters to the proper authorities regardless of where the encounter took place, be it urban or rural.

Avoiding Feral Dogs

Like other wild canines, feral dogs are most active from dusk to dawn.

Take notice of “unexplained” food scraps, large quantities of dog tracks, droppings and other signs of concentrated activity.

Do not run unless you're sure you can escape as this will trigger the dog's hunting instinct.

Though natural carnivores typically attack the throat, feral dogs are more indiscriminate in how and where they attack. They will nip and bite anywhere.

Remember most feral dogs can be highly aggressive and may readily attack without fear.



Photo credit: CDC

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RAT PATROL

Rats can be up to 13 to 18 inches long including the 6 to 8 1/2 inch tail. Rats will eat nearly any type of food, but they prefer high-quality foods such as meat and fresh grain. Rats require 1/2 to 1 fluid ounce of water daily when feeding on dry food. Rats have keen taste, hearing and sense of smell. They will climb to find food or shelter, and they can gain entrance to a building through any opening larger than 1/2 inch across.

Rats have litters of 6 to 12 young, which are born 21 to 23 days after mating. Young rats reach reproductive maturity in about three months. Breeding is most active in spring and fall. The average female has four to six litters per year. Rats can live for up to 18 months, but most die before they are one year old.

Recognizing Rat Infestations

Droppings

Fresh gnawing

Nesting material

Tracks can be seen in mud and on dusty surfaces

Burrows and runways may be found next to buildings or along fences

Rodent-Proofing your Spaces

Seal any openings larger than 1/4 inch to exclude both rats and mice

Openings where utilities enter buildings should be sealed tightly.

Cover edges with sheet metal to prevent gnawing.

Rat Control

Poor sanitation and the presence of garbage help rats to survive in residential areas. Good sanitation will effectively limit the number of rats that can survive in and around your living spaces. Dog pens must be properly maintained to reduce potential rat problems. Removing clutter in working and living spaces allows inspection for signs of rats. Good sanitary practices will not eliminate rats under all conditions, but will make the environment less suitable for them to thrive.

Traps

Trapping is an effective and preferred method. Trapping has several advantages: 1) it does not rely on inherently hazardous poisons; 2) it permits the user to determine if the rat was killed and 3) it allows for disposal of rat carcasses, thus eliminating odor problems that may occur when poisoning is done within buildings. However, trapping is useless if the procedures to prevent reinfestation are not followed.

Bait traps with peanut butter, chocolate candy, dried fruit or a small piece of hot dog or bacon tied securely to the trigger. Set them so that the trigger is sensitive and will spring easily. Set traps close to walls, behind objects, in dark corners and in places where evidence of activity is seen. Place them so that rats will pass directly over the triggers as they follow the natural course of travel, usually close to a wall. Traps can be set on ledges or on top of pallets of stored materials if rats are active in such locations. Use enough traps to eliminate the rodents quickly. (Using too few traps is a common error by individuals attempting to control rats.) Leaving traps unset until the bait has been taken at least once often increases the success of trapping.

Disposal of Dead Rodents

Always wear intact rubber or plastic gloves when removing dead rodents and when cleaning or disinfecting items contaminated by rodents. Dispose of rodents in trash containers with tight fitting lids. After handling rodents, resetting traps and cleaning contaminated objects, thoroughly wash gloved hands in a general household disinfectant or in soap and water. Then remove gloves and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water.

Making Your Space less Desirable to Rodents

Make Sure:

Wood Piles are away from living space and off the ground

Telephone or cable wires are sealed

Food is put away

Do not throw fruit on the ground

Gaps or cracks are sealed

Storage sheds close tightly

Trash cans seal tightly