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the kennels of
Dave Duffey,
James B. Spencer
and
Jerome Robinson.*

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"Maine's winter of 1993-94 was the coldest anyone could remember. Even with temperatures of 50 below zero, my five K-9 Kondos kept my springer spaniels warm and healthy. I found that the Kondo's curved floor kept the hay bedding under them, forming a warm, comfortable nest. They put on so much weight in the K-9 Kondos that winter that I had to reduce their ration. The dogs took to them very well—better than with my 'insulated' doghouses.

"I especially like the low maintenance of the K-9 Kondo. My most destructive dog can't chew his and they are so easy to clean. Although three years old now, they still look new. The door works as well as it did on it's first day and my dogs can't hurt it. No more chewable flaps or doors for me. Thanks to the K-9 Kondo I won't ever waste time, money, paint or labor on building or buying short-lived chewable doghouses."

—Jim Keller, Wild Wind Kennels

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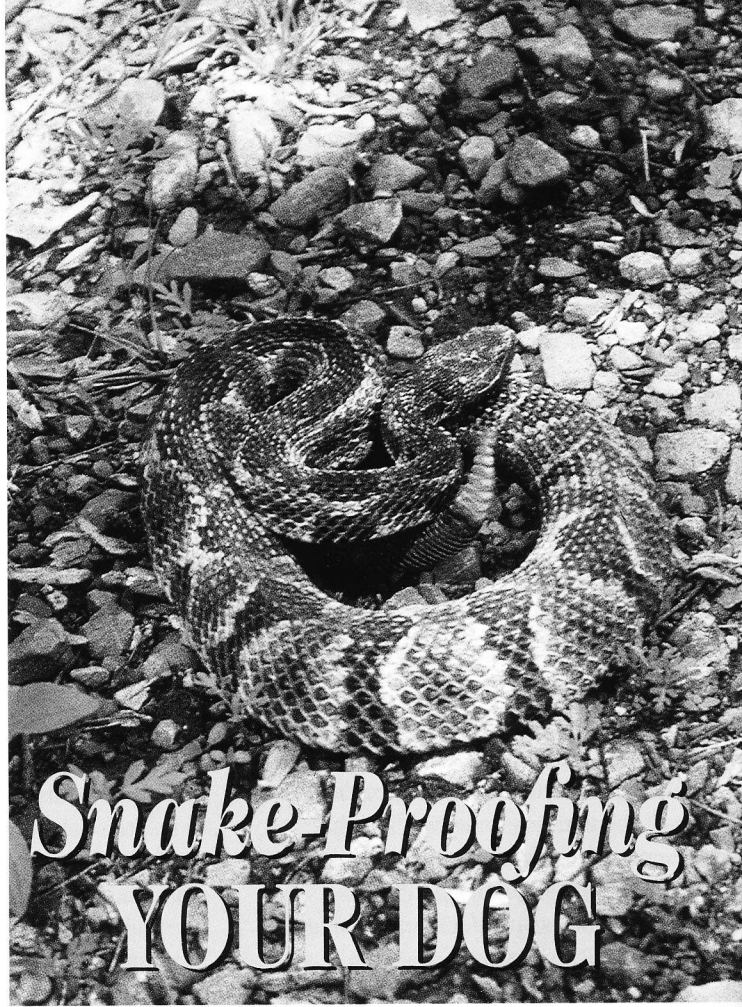
K-9 Kondo with barrel: \$99.95 plus \$21 S&H
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BOB BUTZ PHOTO

Snake-Proofing YOUR DOG

by Stephanie Smith, Ph.D.

With a startled yelp, Jeb jumped straight up and landed about 10 feet from where he started. His concerned handler hurried to check the dog for injuries, but found none. Curious to know what had startled the dog, the handler scanned the brush and found himself staring at a very angry rattlesnake. As Jeb's owner came running up, the handler told him, "Good thing you had Jeb snake-proofed last week. It probably saved his life."

Snake-proofing can indeed save your dog's life by teaching him that snakes are nasty creatures to be avoided, not curiosities to sniff. If a dog has been properly snake-proofed, he will avoid any snake he can see, hear, or smell. Many pointing dog clubs arrange for snake-proofing in late summer, before the fall hunting season begins.

Snake-proofing works very simply: The dog is fitted with an electronic collar and taken by an experienced handler to the first of two de-fanged rattlesnakes – the procedure must be done by an experienced handler, or it will not work.

Bonnie Sue Porter, of Cibolo Creek Kennels, says some owners want to take their own dogs through instead of letting a handler do it for them. There are two problems with this. As Porter states, "First, most owners cannot read their dogs as well as an experienced dog trainer can. The

handler must be able to read the dog, tell what he is thinking, and act appropriately with split-second timing. Few owners can do this. Second, most owners are afraid of rattlesnakes. They communicate this fear to the dog, who avoids the snake on the basis of his owner's fear. This prevents the dog from really seeing and smelling the snake, so the snake-proofing never gets off the ground."

The rattles of the first snake the dog encounters are taped because, as Porter states, "Most dogs know instinctively that the sound of the snake's rattle is dangerous. They won't get close enough to really see or hear the snake if it rattles at them." This is important because a dog may sneak up on a sunning snake, who may be startled and strike without warning.

When the dog sees the snake, he is encouraged to sniff it. If all goes well, the snake strikes and the handler administers electric stimulation at the same time. In any case, the instant the dog takes a good sniff of the snake, he is shocked. The response is usually overwhelming – the dog yelps and takes off for the hills. Since he is on a 20-foot checkcord, he doesn't get very far, and is soon brought back to try again. Only when the dog absolutely refuses to even make eye contact with the snake is he sent on to the next station.

At the second snake station, a rattlesnake without its tail taped awaits the dog. The dog is initially brought in upwind so he cannot see or smell the snake, but can hear

it rattle. If the dog investigates the sound, he is shocked. Then the dog is brought in downwind, so that sight, smell, and sound are all in harmony. Again, if the dog investigates, he is shocked. This continues until the dog not only has no interest in investigating the snake, but actively avoids it.

Finally, the owner is called and given the end of the dog's leash. The owner places the snake between himself and the dog, then calls the dog. The dog will, ideally, come to the owner by making a wide circle around the snake. If the dog comes too close to the snake, he is electronically warned. The reason for this exercise is, according to Porter, "To teach the dog that it is not necessary to run from the snake, but to simply avoid it. We don't want anybody's dog turning tail and heading for the hills; we just don't want them to get bit."

Who should have their dog snake-proofed? Virtually anyone who lets their dog out in the yard in an area with dangerous snakes, or hunts where snakes might be present.

How often is snake-proofing necessary? The dog should be re-proofed the year after he is first done. Many owners re-proof every year. The average cost is \$25-\$40, less for re-proofing, and most owners consider that cheap insurance.

Is snake-proofing worth the trouble and expense? Well, as one handler said, "I'd rather my dog yelp now than die later." ■

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