

Are you afraid of snakes? spiders? insects?

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It is normal to feel anxiety in difficult or unfamiliar situations and in dangerous situations, it is normal to experience fear. Both anxiety and fear can be helpful, because these normal responses help people avoid dangerous situations. But, when the fear reaction is disproportional to the situation or object, this is known as a phobia. The most common phobias that we have encountered are ophidiophobia (snakes), arachniphobia (spiders) and entomophobia (insects).

Snakes. By far, the most commonly encountered snake in the Lincoln area is the harmless garter snake. These small snakes feed on earthworms and insects and are active primarily in the spring and early summer. The majority of other snakes that people encounter in Lancaster County are also harmless. Only one poisonous snake, the western massasauga has its range in part of Lancaster County (see the related article and accompanying map, below).

Spiders. The majority of spiders that are brought to the Lancaster County Extension Office do not produce venom that causes medical problems for people. There are only two spiders whose bites are extremely serious: the black widow and brown recluse. Black widow spiders are extremely uncommon

and rarely brought to the office. We identify two or three cases of brown recluse spiders each year. Most are found in warehouses and other buildings where goods are received from other parts of the country, especially southern states. We do know that a couple apartment buildings in Lincoln have been infested with brown recluse spiders—probably moved by inhabitants from states where this spider is more common. People definitely should be concerned and take appropriate control actions if brown recluse have been identified.

Insects. Most insects that wander into homes are truly insignificant when it comes to causing damage to our structure, possessions or to human health. Only a few, (termites, carpenter ants, cockroaches, fleas and a few other relatively uncommon pests) should concern us. Most of the rest (silverfish, crickets, millipedes, pantry pests, flies, gnats and most ants), are aesthetically unpleasing and may cause psychological discomfort, but not significant economic damage.

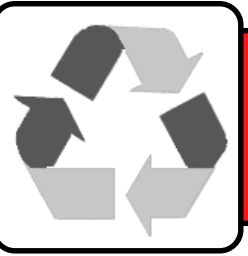
Clients who call our office about pest problems have attitudes that range from hysteria, to passionate animosity, concern, to idle curiosity. It is sometimes difficult to work with hysterical clients. I remember one call from a lady who had a snake in her yard. When I asked her to describe it, she used words like "huge", "dark" and

"ugly". She was so incapacitated by her fear that she couldn't even look at the snake to describe it and was hysterical and absolutely incapable of taking any reasonable action that I suggested. Another reaction that borders on the unreasonable was the mother who was afraid to let her preschoolers play in the yard after she found a few harmless jumping spiders in the grass.

Other folks are so intolerant that they take drastic measures to eliminate the pest and don't consider the consequences of their action. One example is the man who baited a snap trap with peanut butter to kill the vole in his garden and then was heartbroken when a beautiful male cardinal got caught instead. Or the woman who was so upset with the ants that she found in the bottom of her dishwasher that she sprayed the *inside of the dishwasher* with an *insecticide*. The point here is, before you take any action, think about all the possible consequences and consider whether the action will solve the problem. An amusing story that comes to mind is about the woman who built a pond with a fountain in her backyard. Not being a true nature lover, she became upset when a frog decided to live in the pond and began croaking at night. In an effort to kill the frog, she put soap in the pond. The soap did not kill the frog (it continued to sing for a mate) but



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the fountain produced abundant bubbles. She was calling the extension office to see how to get the soap out of her pond. (All of these stories are true from the Lincoln area in the past 7 years.)

The vast majority of callers are concerned about their pest problem, but, after we talk through the problem, we hope they recognize the pest for what

it is and their actions are proportional to the importance of the pest problem. We try to be as understanding as possible with people who have an irrational fear of snakes, spiders or insects. But for most of our callers, we hope to educate and encourage a little tolerance for insects and wildlife in and around the home and yard. (BPO)

Master beekeeping and queen rearing workshops: July 22-24



Experienced beekeepers can improve their skills at advanced workshops scheduled for July 22-24 at the Apiculture Lab, Agricultural Research and Development Center, near Mead, Nebraska.

Master Beekeeping Workshop. This program includes lectures and hands-on training on all aspects of beekeeping. This workshop is designed to provide beekeepers with the knowledge they need to be successful beekeepers. Participants will receive training in pollination and bee biology, Internet resources, marketing and presenting beekeeping information to youth and the public. Cost is \$85.

Queen Rearing Workshop. This workshop will include extensive hands-on training in all aspects of queen rearing. Dr. Marla Spivak, University of Minnesota Apiculturist will conduct this workshop. Cost is \$85.

These sessions run concurrently, but both groups are together for some lectures. Registration for these workshops are limited; applications will be accepted on a first come basis. For more information, contact Dr. Marion Ellis, 402-472-8696. (BPO)

Tread carefully when hiking in Nebraska: watch for poisonous snakes

The recent incident of a dog being bitten by a poisonous snake in Lincoln has prompted a number of questions about poisonous snakes in this part of Nebraska.

Nebraska has four poisonous snakes—the prairie rattlesnake, timber rattlesnake, the western massasauga and the copperhead. Only the western massasauga, a small rattlesnake, is found in pockets in Lancaster County. However, the historic range of this snake is throughout south-

eastern Nebraska. See the map, below.

The western massasauga is between 20-30 inches long. It has dark, somewhat round blotches down the back and smaller, less distinct blotches on the sides. The ground color is light gray or tan-gray and the belly is light with dark mottling.

Young are born in mid to late summer and are about 7-9 inches long. Female rattlesnakes do not lay eggs, but hold the eggs inside their body until

hatching; the baby rattlers are born alive.

Massasaugas are found in prairie or grassland areas, often in marshy sites or rock outcroppings. The name massasauga is a Native American term meaning "swamp dweller", referring to its preference for wet areas.

Poisonous snakes can be recognized by having blotchy or banded color patterns, different from the more common striped garter snakes. Look for a triangular head that is distinctly wider than the neck, although other snakes may display this characteristic, especially when alarmed. Rattlesnakes usually sound a warning rattle when nearby, but other nonpoisonous snakes, vibrate their tails rapidly when alarmed and in dry vegetation this may sound like a warning rattle.

snakes also have elliptical, cat-like, eye pupils, a "pit" between the eye and nostril and a single row of scales on the underside of the tail.

When hiking in areas where you might contact one of these poisonous snakes, wear high-top boots and loose-fitting pants. Always be aware of where you step, sit and put your hands. Be especially careful when stepping over or around logs or rocks. Camp in a tent with a floor and zippered door and in open areas. Gather firewood before dark.

Anticipate where snakes might be found. Because snakes are "cold-blooded", they move to where conditions are most comfortable. On cool days,

snakes can be found sunning on rocks; on hot days, snakes are more likely to be found in the shade. At night, snakes may be attracted to the radiant heat from paved roads.

If you see a snake that may be poisonous, leave it alone. It may be tempting to try to kill it or capture it, but many unfortunate people have gotten bitten by meddling with a poisonous snake.

This information has been excerpted from EC89-1761, "Poisonous Snakes and Snakebite in Nebraska". This publication has colored pictures of all four Nebraska poisonous snakes and can be purchased (\$0.50) at the Lancaster County Extension Office. (BPO)



(Map information provided by J. D. Lynch, professor in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

- Western massasauga range in Nebraska
- Historic western massasauga range in Nebraska where the snake hasn't been seen in 20-40 years
- Copper head range in Nebraska
- Prairie rattlesnake range in Nebraska
- Range of the timber rattlesnake in Nebraska
- Historic timber rattlesnake range in Nebraska where the snake hasn't been seen in 20-40 years
- Dotted areas represent areas where the timber rattlesnake range overlaps with the western massasauga and the copperhead



Nebraska's poisonous