

My Dog Has Been Bitten by an Adder

Family Matters

It's a beautiful spring or summer walk.

Your dog suddenly yelps, starts limping and you notice a swelling on their leg or face.

You wonder if they've been stung by an insect.

But sometimes, it's something more serious.

It could be an **adder bite**.

Fortunately, adders are the UK's only native venomous snake, and bites are relatively uncommon. The good news is that **most dogs recover well with prompt veterinary treatment**.

At Amity, we believe knowing what to look for and acting quickly gives your dog the best chance of a full recovery. Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you stay calm if this ever happens.

Where Are Adders Found?

Adders are most active between spring and autumn.

They are commonly found on:

- Heathland.
- Moorland.
- Woodland edges.
- Sand dunes.
- Long grass.
- Coastal paths.

Most bites occur because a curious dog accidentally startles the snake.

What Are the Signs?

The bite usually affects the nose or a front leg.

Common signs include:

- A sudden yelp.
- Rapid swelling.
- Pain.

- Reluctance to walk.
- Lethargy.
- Drooling.
- Vomiting.
- Collapse in severe cases.

You may notice two small puncture wounds, but they aren't always obvious.

What Should I Do?

If you suspect an adder bite:

- Keep your dog as calm as possible.
- Carry them if practical, especially if they've been bitten on a leg.
- Contact your veterinary practice immediately.
- Travel to the practice without delay.

The more your dog runs around, the faster the venom may circulate through the body.

What Shouldn't I Do?

Don't try to suck out the venom.

Don't cut the wound.

Don't apply a tourniquet.

Don't put ice directly onto the bite.

These old first-aid recommendations have been shown to do more harm than good.

The most important treatment is getting your dog to a vet promptly.

How Is an Adder Bite Treated?

Treatment depends on how severely your dog has been affected.

It may include:

- Pain relief.
- Intravenous fluids.
- Monitoring blood pressure and heart rate.
- Blood tests.
- Medication to support circulation.
- Hospitalisation for observation.

In selected severe cases, antivenom may also be recommended.

Most dogs respond very well to supportive treatment.

What Is the Prognosis?

The vast majority of dogs recover completely, particularly when treatment is started early.

Swelling often looks alarming and may continue to worsen during the first 24 hours before gradually improving.

Your dog may need a few days or weeks to recover fully, depending on the severity of the bite.

Staying Safe

You don't need to avoid countryside walks.

Simply keep dogs under good control in areas where adders are known to live, particularly during warm weather, and discourage them from investigating long grass or piles of vegetation.

At Amity, we'd always rather examine a dog that turns out **not** to have been bitten than miss the opportunity to treat one that has.

Because in emergencies, early action makes all the difference.

Because they're not just your dog.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.