What is the Habu snake?

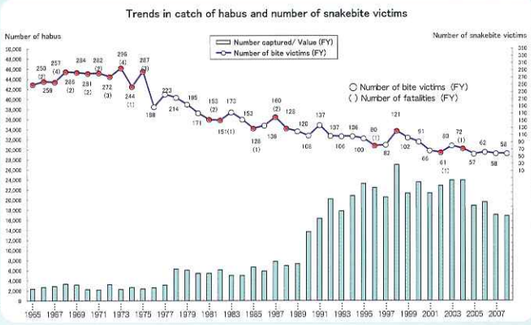
It is a venomous pit viper species of the Viperidae. It is the largest species of venomous snake in Asia and can grow to over two meters in length. Of the Amami Islands, Habu inhabit Amami Oshima, Kakeroma Island, Uke Island, Yoro Island, and Tokunoshima Island. They do not inhabit Kikai Island, Okinoerabu Island, and Yoron Island.

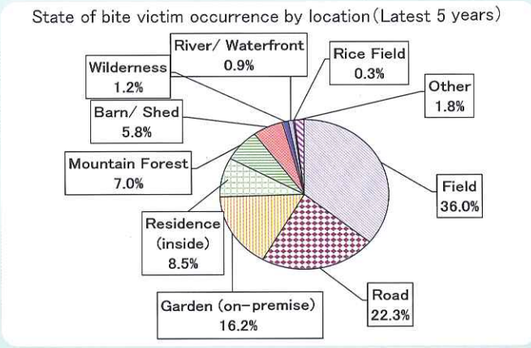
On average, Habu lay 8-10 eggs between June and July. It takes approximately 40 days for the eggs to hatch. Habu are about 40 cm long when they hatch and are born possessing venom that is the same strength as that of a fully-grown Habu. An attack by a baby Habu is just as lethal as that of an adult Habu. It take about three years for Habu to grow to their full length of about 110cm, at which point they are capable of reproducing.

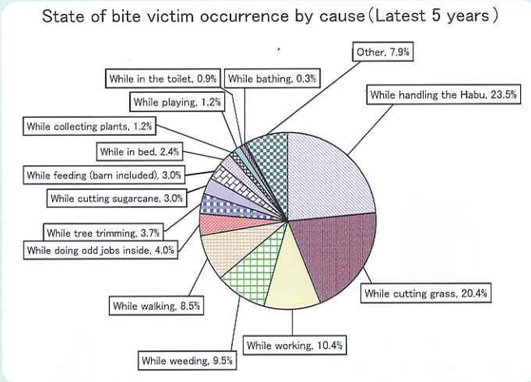
Habu are carnivores and prey largely on rats (80% of their diet), although they will also prey on birds, reptiles, and amphibians. In order to keep Habu away from one's living environment, it is important to take measures to keep it free of rats.

Habu inhabit areas that are not heavily populated by humans. They can be found in the mountains and lower-lying areas, as well as in farm fields, such as sugarcane. They will sometimes enter small villages, which are typically close to mountains and fields. Areas where the Habu is likely to find prey are the areas where they are most prevalent. Habu are active mostly when searching for food. On any given day, they will only move in a radius of about 100 meters. If you spot a Habu, you can assume that it will remain in that general area for the rest of the day.

Habu are nocturnal snakes. They are typically active in temperatures ranging from 18°Cto 30°C, and are most active at 24°C. Habu are most active from April-June and September-October. When a Habu's body temperature exceeds 33~35°C, it can rapidly weaken and die. During the months of July and August, daytime temperatures are usually too hot for the Habu and they are rarely active during the day.







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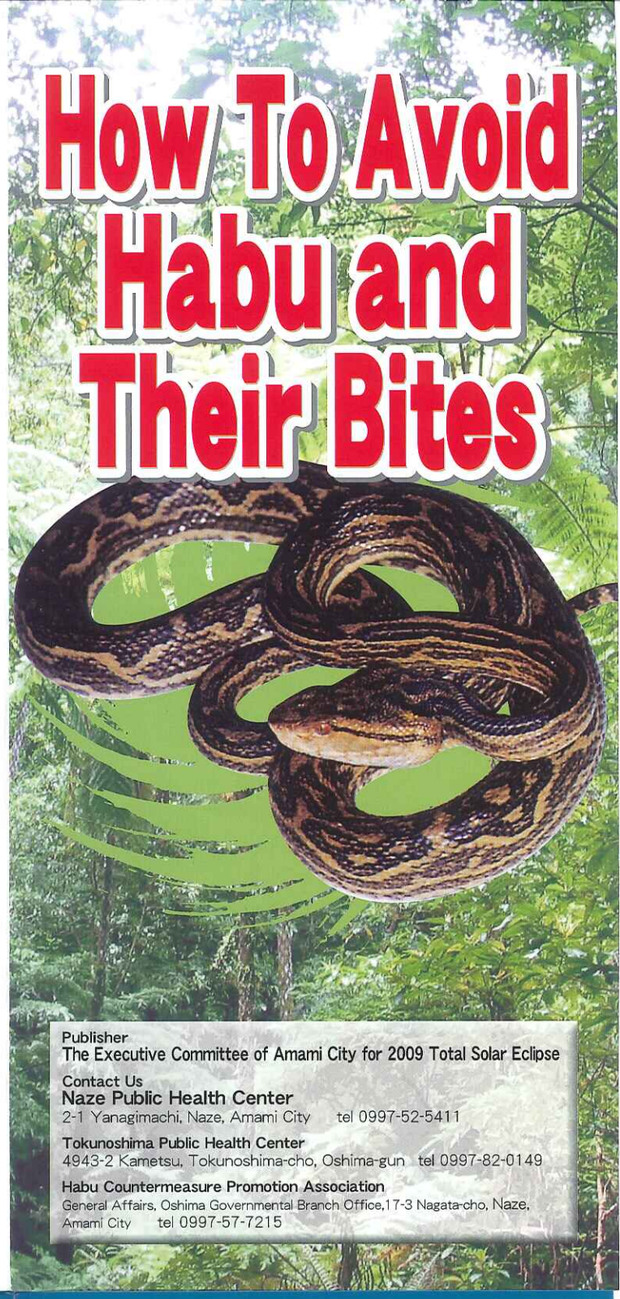
How To Avoid Habu and Their Bites



Publisher
The Executive Committee of Amami City for 2009 Total Solar Eclipse

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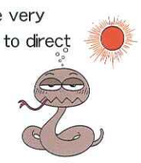
Seven Tips To Avoid Habu

1. Walk in the middle of the road.
2. Be cautious when entering grassy areas.
3. If out walking at night, always be sure to have a flashlight/torch to illuminate your path.
4. Keep grass and branches around the living environment cut back, as Habu and rats favor these areas as hiding spots.
5. If entering grassy areas, be sure to wear boots that are at least knee-high and continuously hit the grass directly in your path with a long stick to check for Habu. If you encounter a Habu, keep over 2 meters away from it, as it can jump a distance of up to 2 meters.
6. Before entering a goat or cattle pen, always check above and below the entrance, as well as to the left and right of it. Also check the rafters and ceilings of the enclosure, as Habu are sometimes found there.
7. When working in and around grassy areas and riverbanks, wear a wide-brim hat, thick long-sleeved shirt, leather gloves, cloth leg protectors, and knee-high boots.

Habu are very sensitive to direct sunlight.



Keeping rats away will keep Habu away

Always be aware of your surroundings and stay on the lookout for Habu. If you encounter a Habu, immediately remove yourself from its vicinity.

Wear a wide-brim hat, loose shirt, knee-high boots, and gloves when working in areas where Habu might potentially be present.

Walk in the middle of the road with a flashlight/torch

Emergency Treatment for Habu Bites and Directions On How to Use the Portable Habu Venom Extraction Pump

If bitten by a Habu, it is vital that you go to the hospital immediately for treatment. It is also extremely important to provide emergency treatment on the way to the hospital.

In the event that you get bitten by a Habu, without being upset remain calm and carry out the following steps.

Do the following steps if bitten by a Habu.

①Remain calm and try to stay still in order to slow the spread of venom in the body. Call for help, from people nearby and if possible the hospital.

②It is important to promptly begin venom extraction. If a venom extraction pump is unavailable, use the mouth to suck out the venom and spit it out. Until arriving at the hospital, keep trying to extract the venom from the bite.

③Another important way to help slow the spread of venom in the body is to use a towel or cord to tightly bind areas that are closer to the heart than the area where bitten. For example, if bitten on the calf, bind the area of the leg above the knee.

④Try to get to the hospital as quickly as possible.Try to phone the hospital in advance so that they can immediately begin preparations for the antivenom treatment. Go by ambulance if one is immediately available, as the paramedics can provide professional care.

Kagoshima Prefecture is working to make the use of the Portable Habu Venom Extraction Pump very widespread. This pump is easy for individuals to operate and they fit in the pockets of normal work clothes.

「Portable Habu Venom Extraction Pump」

Directions for the Venom Extraction Pump

①Choose the transparent cap that is best suited to the location and size of the bite and firmly attach it to the end opposite of the white plunger.

②Pull the white plunger all the way out and make sure the extraction cup is pressed firmly against the bite area.

③Push the white plunger all the way in. It is okay to use the knees or a nearby tree for support to make it easier to push in, as it can be difficult. Repeat the whole process until arriving at the hospital.

Warning

1. The Extraction Pump is only intended for emergency care and is NOT a substitute for professional medical care. It is vital that you go to the hospital and are treated by a doctor.
2. The Venom Extraction Pump can be purchased at pharmacies and drug stores.