Effectiveness of Rattlesnake Aversion Training in Dogs

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Purpose:

1. To describe the various methods currently used for rattlesnake aversion training in Arizona.
2. To determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of one method of rattlesnake aversion training:
   1. To train dogs to recognize any available rattlesnake cue as a threat in a natural environment, and
   2. To prevent rattlesnake envenomation in dogs.
3. To investigate if there are breed or age response differences to rattlesnake aversion training.

Thesis: Currently many Arizona residents undertake rattlesnake avoidance training for their canine companions each year. There are a variety of methods used for avoidance training, but no quantitative measures on the success of any such method and no peer reviewed publications on the subject. Various methods are used for avoidance training, including some that potentially can result in injury to the rattlesnake, or worse, envenomation for the dog if proper precautions are not taken. So, if we don’t know if the method works, why are Arizona residents paying for it?

Target Readers: Veterinarians, Dog owners, dog trainers, herpetologists, General public

Research method: Consumers who have voluntarily completed rattlesnake aversion training with their dogs using Rattlesnake Ready (<https://rattlesnakeready.com/>) method for at least an initial training session. Consumers will be sent a voluntary survey to the email they provided at training to assess the effectiveness of the rattlesnake aversion training in their dog/s. Respondents will be eligible for the raffle of an Amazon gift card.

Control – Dogs that have been envenomated and sought treatment at two local emergency hospitals in Tucson

Survey 1: Dogs that have undergone rattlesnake aversion training

Your animal has undergone rattlesnake avoidance training with Rattlesnake Ready. The University of Arizona College of Veterinary Medicine is conducting a survey of owners. If you would kindly take 15 minutes to participate in this survey, it would helpful for future dog owners. Two owners will be drawn at random for a $50 amazon gift card.

Information gathered:

* Age, breed, sex of dog at training (Drop down menu)
* Age, breed, sex of dog now (Drop down menu)
* How many times has your dog gone through rattlesnake aversion training?
* Area you live in: Phoenix & surrounding metro area, Tucson & surrounding metro area, Other: Specify

1. Since training, has your dog encountered a rattlesnake? Yes/no
   1. If yes- briefly describe the encounter. (can use AI to look for key words)
   2. If yes- did your dog avoid the rattlesnake as trained? Yes, no, could not tell
      1. If yes- how did your dog identify the rattlesnake? (scent, sight, sound, combination, unknown)
      2. If no- did you schedule further training sessions for your dog?
   3. If no, on a scale of 1-5 how confident do you feel that your dog would avoid a rattlesnake after training? (1=not confident, 5 = very confident)
2. Since training, has your dog been envenomated by a rattlesnake?
   1. If yes, was the bite accidental, provoked, or unknown?
   2. If yes, what was the approximate cost of treatment?
3. Additional (potential) questions:
   1. What led you to seek rattlesnake aversion training for your dog?
      1. Hiking
      2. Hunting
      3. Other outdoor activities
      4. Live next to a wash/area known to have rattlesnakes
      5. General Safety
      6. Fear about cost of treating an envenomation
4. During the first step of training, was your dog initially interested in the rattlesnake?

Survey 2: Envenomated animals

Your animal was recently envenomated by a rattlesnake and you sought care at a local emergency practice. The University of Arizona College of Veterinary Medicine is conducting a survey of owners. If you would kindly take 5 minutes to participate in this survey, it would helpful for future dog owners. Two owners will be drawn at random for a $50 amazon gift card.

Information gathered:

* Age, breed, sex of dog at the time of bite (Drop down menu)
* Prior to the rattlesnake bite, had your dog gone through rattlesnake avoidance training?
  + If yes, which company did you use for rattlesnake avoidance training?
  + If yes, how long before the bite was the rattlesnake avoidance training?
* Area you live in: Phoenix & surrounding metro area, Tucson & surrounding metro area, Other: Specify
* Where did your animal encounter the rattlesnake? In your yard, on a hike/walk on leash, on a hike/walk off leash, Other (please specify)
* Did your animal survive rattlesnake envenomation?

We are so sorry your animal had to go through such a traumatic experience. Thank you for helping future dog owners!

Other “trainers”:

Animal Experts, INC (Tucson) 520-531-1020 --- animalexpertsinc.com

Viper Voidance (New River) 480-215-1776 --- vipervoidance.com

Partner’s Dog Training (Cave Creek, Scottsdale) --- partnersdogs.com

Arizona Rattlesnake Aversion (Payson) 928-651-9494 --- arizonarattlesnake.com

\*I can provide many more out of state trainers if needed??