



Tool Box Talk

Focus on Performance

Reptiles

Sust. 21

What?

There are six species of reptiles native to the UK:

- Snakes: adders, grass snake, smooth snake
- Lizards: common lizard, sand lizard, slow worm

Dry heathlands, edges of woodland and scrubby grassland are the best natural habitats for British reptiles, but semi-natural areas with heath-like conditions such as railway embankments, sea walls, road verges, churchyards, golf courses and almost any area with a sunny south facing slope and open vegetation may be suitable. Grass snakes are commonly found in damper habitats around ponds, ditches or open grassland.



Adder

Why?

All British reptiles are protected by legislation. This includes causing injury or death and damage or destruction of habitat. Prosecution can lead to fines of up to £5,000 and 6 months in prison.



Slow worms



Grass snake

How?

- Check the site and adjacent areas (especially areas of scrubby grassland. Suitable habitats may have been identified in ecological surveys.
- Often sites may be cleared of reptiles by ecologists, and reptile proof fencing erected to keep the work area clear. Ensure you do not damage or take down any reptile fencing.
- If you are unsure whether your work may affect a reptile, seek expert ecological advice.
- Stop work immediately and report any sightings.
- Only licensed workers are permitted to handle reptiles. Never pick up and move any reptiles, or disturb log piles or stones where they have been sighted.
- The Adder is the only venomous snake in the UK. It is not aggressive unless threatened, but they are known to bite. Bites are rarely serious (unless young, elderly or infirm).
- **If you receive a bite, seek immediate medical attention.**



Common lizard

If the works are likely to disturb a reptile habitat, a licence is needed from the relevant body:

- England: Natural England
- Scotland: Scottish Natural Heritage
- Wales: Countryside Council for Wales

Questions

1. What sort of places might reptiles be found?
2. What should you do if you receive an adder bite?
3. What is the potential fine for injuring or killing a reptile?

If you have any queries regarding the content of this tool box talk please contact your Sustainability Advisor or Line Manager.