



spiders

There are many hundreds of species of spiders in Australia and such an emphasis has been put on spiders being poisonous, we often forget that very few spiders are actually harmful.

It is estimated that the weight of insects eaten annually by spiders outweighs the total weight of the entire human population!

Types of spiders

Red-back spider

In Western Australia, the only spider to be lethal is the **red-back spider**. They are seen mostly in disturbed areas and seem to like living near humans. They nest in dry, sheltered areas where they build messy, tangled webs with sticky tracer leads going to the ground that 'crackle' if you run a stick through them. The female is easily identified with her long delicate front legs and a red or orange stripe on her pear shaped abdomen. She also has a red or orange hourglass shape on her underside. Only the female is considered dangerous but is generally a timid spider, biting only in defence or when disturbed.

Although red-back spider bites are usually immediately painful, the venom (which contains neurotoxins) works very slowly. Bites can result in headache, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, fever, hypertension and, in severe cases, paralysis. Untreated the symptoms worsen over a 24 hour period and may take weeks or months to heal.

White tailed spiders

White tailed spiders are common and widespread in Australia. They are often seen inside houses, especially during the summer evenings and are vagrant hunters. They are medium sized spiders, with cylindrical abdomens, grey to black bodies with stout legs and a white patch at the tip of the abdomen. They feed mainly on other spiders, plucking at their webs to imitate the struggling of an ensnared insect and then seizing the unsuspecting spider when it comes out of its retreat.

White-tailed spider bites typically cause initial burning pain followed by swelling and itchiness at the bite site. Occasionally, weals or cases of blistering ulceration have been reported and some medical studies suggest that this may be due to a secondary infection of the wound. If they are common in the house, it is a good idea to check bedding before going to bed. Also, check your shoes before putting them on and do not leave clothing on the floor, as these spiders are often found sheltering in such items.

Other spiders

Black house spider

Robust hairy spiders range from 9mm (male) to 18mm (Female), and are grey to black in colour

Daddy long – legs

Small dainty bodies with long legs up to 50mm in length

Huntsman spiders

Large hairy grey-brown spiders with flattened bodies

Helpful hints

- Children's toys and garden furniture are harbourage areas and need checking before using
- Keep garden hedges clipped back

Information sourced from Department of Agriculture



environmentally aware pest & weed management