

Danger Zone!



Animals have developed feeding and defensive mechanisms to help them survive in their natural habitats. We need to be aware of these to avoid being accidentally injured.

Animals with spines

Some species of marine animals have spines that may contain venom, which is released on contact with the skin.

The venom may cause extreme pain, depending on the size of the animal and the amount of venom injected. All animals with spines, such as fish and sea urchins should be handled with care to avoid potential puncture wounds.

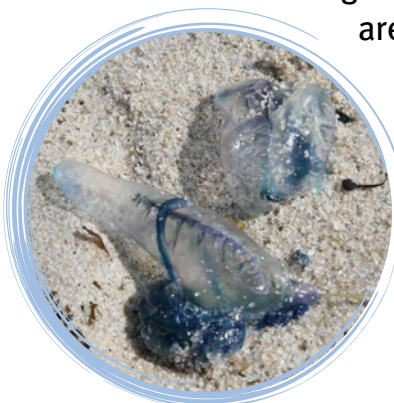


Animals that bite

Be aware that animals found on the beach, such as seals and sea lions, sea snakes, turtles and other reptiles may bite if they feel threatened. In rock pool areas also look out for blue-ringed octopus hiding in empty shells and rubbish. Some animals such as sea snakes and blue-ringed octopus can potentially be deadly to humans as they release venom with their bite!

Animals that sting

Corals, sea jellies and anemones have stinging cells, which can inflict a painful sting on humans. Sea jellies are the most common stinger encountered at the beach and should be handled with caution, as these animals may still release their stinging cells when out of the water.



Animals that are poisonous to eat

Some fish species such as the weeping toadfish and other pufferfish are poisonous to eat. They contain a lethal toxin, which attacks the nervous system. Do not allow dogs to mouth any dead fish as they can ingest sufficient toxin to kill them.

Other animals to be cautious of!

Be careful if handling sea hares – when threatened, these molluscs may excrete colourless toxic slime from the skin and a cloud of purple ink that can irritate the eyes. Some species can even kill a dog if eaten or even mouthed!

Embedded in the bodies of some sponges are microscopic structures called spicules that provide a support or 'skeleton' for the animal. These hard spicules are made of either calcium carbonate (limestone) or glassy silica that vary in size and shape. Many are needle-like rods with pointed ends that can severely irritate the tissues of other animals, so they can be used to deter predators.

Be careful of pretty shells. Although not all cones are dangerous to humans, it is best to treat them with caution. Mollusc and worm-eating cones can inflict a painful sting but the venom of fish-eating cones can cause a human to suffer breathing difficulties, paralysis or even death. Empty shells can provide homes for other marine animals like hermit crabs and octopus, and some shells may also be sharp to touch, such as the razor clam – so you should always handle them with caution.

