

BOOK REVIEW

Venomous and Poisonous Animals – A Handbook for Biologists, Toxicologists and Toxinologists, Physicians and Pharmacists, by Dietrich Mebs. medpharm Scientific Publishers, Stuttgart, 2002. Hardback, 339 pp. Price: EUR 86 / sFr 137.60. ISBN 3-88763-093-9. (In North America, available from CRC Press; ISBN 0-8493-1264-7.)

Life is a struggle on both land and in the sea and many animals have developed chemical weapons, for attack or defence. These toxins, venoms or poisons, are diverse in both structure and function and are delivered to victims in equally diverse ways. Humans frequently encounter these venomous and poisonous animals and all too often suffer unpleasant consequences including death, be it from a bite or sting causing envenoming, or poisoning after eating the wrong animal.

- Which animal species are involved, how do they use their venom and toxins?
- What is the chemical composition of these natural products and how do they act?
- What are the most appropriate first aid measures, which therapy is possible and necessary?

This beautifully illustrated tome starts with an introduction to toxinology (7 chapters) and then proceeds to venomous marine animals and terrestrial invertebrates and vertebrates. Almost every page includes at least one full colour photograph of the animals under discussion. The author, a toxicologist at the Department of Forensic Science of the University of Frankfurt, Germany, provides expert information for biologists, toxicologists, pharmacists, physicians, and also for travellers.

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