



Poisonous animals 1.1 Poisonous Snakes –

Identification of the exact variety of venomous snake involved in a particular case can be of great benefit in evolving effective treatment strategies.

The WHO classifies the following as Indian Snakes of Medical Importance:

Class I - Commonly cause death or serious disability: Cobra/ Russells Viper/Saw-Scaled Viper

Class II - Uncommonly cause bites but are recorded to cause serious effects (death or local necrosis): Krait/King Cobra

Class III - Commonly cause bites but serious effects are very uncommon.

Features Indicative of Venomous Snake

- Usually dull coloured: brown, black, grey, dull green, etc.
- Stout body with abruptly tapering tail
- Compressed tail
- Broad belly scales extending across entire width of belly
- Small scales on triangular head
- Pit between eye and nostril
- Presence of hood with or without markings
- Presence of fangs
- Presence of rattle at the end of tail

The term '**The Big Four**' has been used in India for many decades, to describe the **common cobra, Russell's viper, common krait and saw-scaled viper**. This was due to the belief that these four snakes were responsible for causing virtually all snakebite deaths in India.