Pennsylvania
Fish and Boat Commission

Venomous Snake Permit Terms and Conditions

1. Permittee shall abide by all current Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission laws and regulations regarding reptiles and amphibians.
2. The permit shall be in the possession of the permittee at all times while hunting venomous snakes.
3. Permittee must possess a current Pennsylvania resident or non-resident fishing license while hunting venomous snakes.
4. It is unlawful to alter, lend or transfer this permit to another person.
5. This permit authorizes possession of the Timber Rattlesnake and the Copperhead but **DOES NOT** authorize the possession of the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake (state endangered species).
6. Permittee shall comply with the seasons and annual limits for Timber Rattlesnakes and Copperheads.
7. Permittee may only take, kill or possess Timber Rattlesnakes **at least 42 inches** in length, which **have 21 or more subcaudal scales** (see below instructions for determining the length and subcaudal count).
8. Permittee, upon taking, killing, or possessing a Timber Rattlesnake, shall immediately **complete in its entirety** the possession tag that is attached to the permit and **detach** the tag from the permit in the field. Permittee shall complete the possession tag in accordance with the instructions printed on the tag. Permittee shall keep the possession tag in a safe location so that it can be presented along with the Timber Rattlesnake to which it pertains upon the request of an officer authorized to enforce the code. After the possession tag is detached, it is unlawful for permittee to take, catch, kill or possess another Timber Rattlesnake. It is unlawful to alter, borrow, lend or transfer possession tags.
9. When presenting a rattlesnake to a taxidermist for mounting, the possession tag shall remain with the rattlesnake while in the possession of the taxidermist.
10. Reporting a Timber Rattlesnake and/or a Copperhead: If permittee takes, kills or possesses a Timber Rattlesnake and/or Copperhead **permittee shall report on the HuntFishPA portal or send in a report on a form prescribed by the PA Fish and Boat Commission within 10 days of the taking, killing, or possession (example: if permittee possessed a Timber Rattlesnake on June 15th and a Copperhead on July 15th then the Timber Rattlesnake report must be submitted by June 27th and the Copperhead report by July 27th).**
11. If permittee hunted snakes but did not kill or possess a Timber Rattlesnake or Copperhead, permittee shall **report on the HuntFishPA portal or** send a report on a form

prescribed by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to the following address postmarked by **AUGUST 10th** of the permit year:

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
Division of Environmental Services
Natural Diversity Section
Centre Region Office
595 E. Rolling Ridge Drive
Bellefonte, PA 16823

Even if permittee did not hunt, capture or retain any snakes during the permit year, permittee must file a report. **FAILURE TO SUBMIT THE REQUIRED VENOMOUS SNAKE PERMIT REPORT WILL RESULT IN A CITATION BEING ISSUED FOR VIOLATION OF THE FISH AND BOAT REGULATIONS.**

12. Permittee shall indemnify and save harmless the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, its officers, agents, and employees, from any and all claims and losses for personal injuries or property damage to any person arising out of the exercise of this permit.
13. Upon the request of an officer authorized to enforce the Fish and Boat Code, permittee shall measure a Timber Rattlesnake to determine its length. If permittee is unable to measure the Timber Rattlesnake, permittee shall allow the officer to seize the snake so that a measurement may be taken at another location.

Length Measurement and Sex Determination

The conditions of this permit require all permit holders to provide an annual report of Timber Rattlesnakes and Copperheads seen or captured and to provide biological and location data. As in the past, total length and sex measurements are requested for snakes that are handled. However, some hunters observe or photograph the snakes and do not handle them. In those cases, it should be indicated on the report form that lengths are estimates and the snake was observed but not handled. Individuals are requested to supply the length of Copperheads, but sex determination is not required. Individuals are requested to supply the length and determine the sex of Timber Rattlesnakes.

Since you are handling venomous snakes, we recommend the use of the tubing technique to safely contain the snakes while taking the below measurements. To tube a snake, we recommend a snake tube that you can buy (e.g. online) or make (clear plastic tube).

Total Length Measurements (inches)

Timber Rattlesnakes: measure from the nose of the rattlesnake to the base of the rattle.

Copperhead: measure from the nose of the Copperhead to the end of the tail.

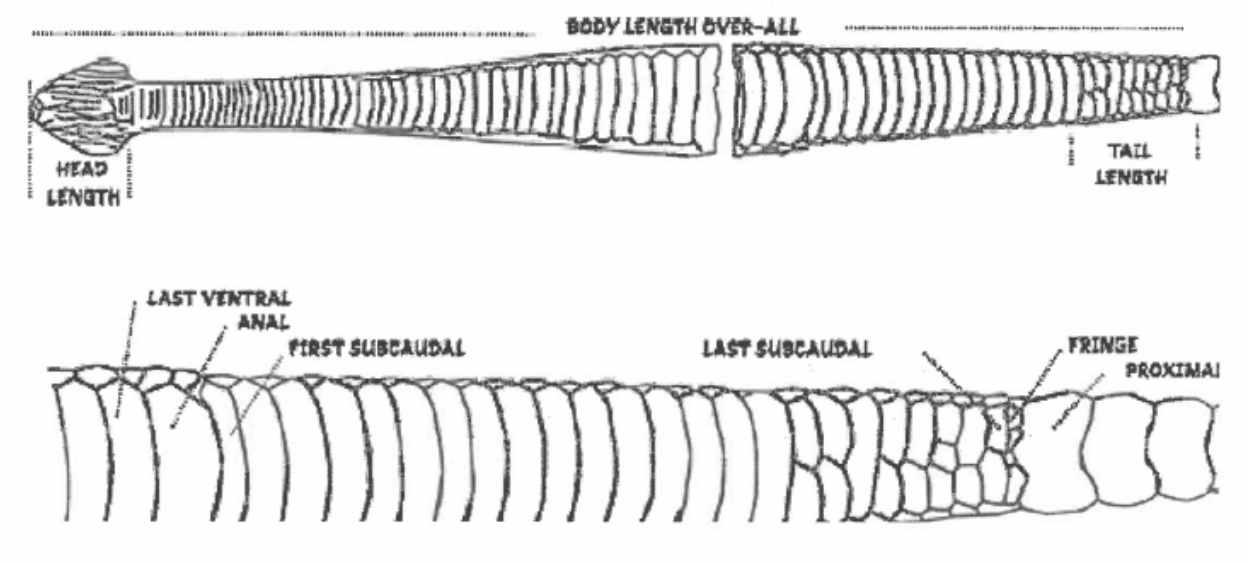
Timber Rattlesnake Sex Determination

Historically, the preferred method of sexing snakes was to insert a lubricated probe under the cloaca toward the end of the tail. This method, if done carefully, is an accurate way to determine a snake's sex. However, if done improperly, there is a risk of injury to the snake, especially females. Therefore, we are recommending the use of an alternate method of sex determination. This method still requires the assistance of one or more handlers but is non-invasive and easier on the snake.

Dr. Howard Reinert, a well-known rattlesnake researcher, has provided an alternate method of sex determination by counting subcaudal (under tail) scales. Data collected from Pennsylvania Timber Rattlesnakes was used to determine a 95% accuracy rate of sex determination using this method. This accuracy rate is more than acceptable since it eliminates the opportunity for injury to the snakes as result of invasive sex determination procedures. Male snakes have longer tails than female snakes because the male reproductive organs (hemipenes) are housed in the tail. The longer tail is the result of an increased number of vertebrae in the tail. The scales on the underside of the snake correspond to the number of vertebrae in the backbone and tail. As a result, the number of scales on the bottom side of the tail of Timber Rattlesnakes can be used to determine the sex of the snake. This method is safer and simpler than probing for the presence of the male reproductive organs. Dr. Reinert has provided the following procedure for determining sex by sub-caudal scale counts.

Procedure:

1. Examine the underside of the tail and find the half-moon shaped scale that covers the anus (anal scale). This is where the tail of the snake begins. The tail ends at the base of the rattle (not the tip). In Timber Rattlesnakes, the underside of the tail is always dark in color while the body may be considerably lighter in color. Often there is an obvious change in color from light to dark at the anus.
2. Count the number of large flat scales between the anus and the base of the rattle. Do not include any of the rattle segments or the very small scales that form a fringe around the base of the rattle. Refer to the accompanying drawing.
3. Occasionally snakes will have some abnormalities in the scales under the tail. These appear as split scales (see drawing) and should be regarded as one complete scale in your count.
4. **Males:** have 21 or more subcaudal scales between the anus and the rattle.
   Females: have 20 or fewer subcaudal scales between the anus and the rattle.
5. Record: 1) the number of subcaudal scales and 2) sex on the report form.


BODY LENGTH OVER-ALL
HEAD LENGTH
TAIL LENGTH
LAST VENTRAL
ANAL
FIRST SUBCAUDAL
LAST SUBCAUDAL
FRINGE
PROXIMAL