



# Ornamental Snakes in Brigalow Country



Photo: Stewart MacDonald

Ornamental snakes (*Denisonia maculata*) are listed as "Vulnerable" under the *Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)* due to habitat loss. Their biggest threat is habitat destruction from agricultural expansion and urban development.

Native to Australia and specifically found in Queensland, their habitat is in the brigalow threatened ecological community.

While Ornamental snakes are venomous, they are not dangerous to humans or cattle. Ornamental snakes are critical to a healthy ecosystem and it's important we do what we can to protect them.

An ecological community is a naturally occurring group of native plants, animals and other organisms that are interacting in a unique habitat.

Ornamental snakes are key predators that help to maintain the structure and stability of Australia's ecosystems. They mainly eat frogs and other small reptiles. The extinction of any snake species may result in a variety of negative impacts on the ecosystem. Snakes are responsible for keeping small animals in check. Removal of snakes from the environment could cause ripple effects.

## Threats to the Ornamental Snake's survival

Ornamental snakes and cattle may share the same habitat, especially in agricultural areas where cattle graze near wetlands, forests, or across grasslands.

- ⚠️ Grazing by cattle degrades the snakes habitat.
- ⚠️ There is a risk of snakes being accidentally trampled by cattle, especially in dense grazing areas. However, snakes generally avoid larger animals and can often escape in time.

## Threatened Ecological Community and its importance to ornamental snakes

- ✓ Brigalow provides a crucial habitat for the ornamental snake.
- ✓ Dense vegetation, coupled with patches of open grassland, creates a suitable environment for these snakes to hunt and shelter.
- ✓ The conversion of Brigalow to farmland and pasture for cattle grazing has led to a decline in suitable habitats for the ornamental snake.
- ✓ Protecting and restoring Brigalow is crucial for the conservation of the ornamental snake.



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## FAST FACTS

- 🗨️ Distinctive highly ornamental appearance, with a pattern of spots and bands often in shades of brown and grey
- 🗨️ Combination of colours and patterns provides effective camouflage in their natural habitat
- 🗨️ 50-70cm in length
- 🗨️ Nocturnal and active in warmer wetter months
- 🗨️ Tends to hibernate during cooler months
- 🗨️ While it is venomous, its venom is not considered dangerous to humans

# How land managers can help ornamental snakes

Implement rotational grazing practices. This will reduce overgrazing which can lead to habitat degradation.

Provide alternative water sources for cattle to reduce their reliance on natural water sources, preventing contamination of natural waterways and reducing disturbance of snake habitat

Allow areas to rest and recover from grazing, helping to maintain vegetation cover and soil health.

Use fencing to protect sensitive habitats from cattle and control their access to allow for rest periods

Manage fuel loads on land appropriately with cool burns preferred for fire management

Leave or add woody debris or leaf litter to create micro-habitats

Sensitive habitats include hollows where rainwater collects.



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