

Bow Wow, Meow and...Hiss?

Don't be surprised if you hear a few hisses and even a hair-raising rattle or two in between the barking and purring on September 30 at Fort Toulouse when the annual "Bark in the Park" sponsored by the Humane Society of Elmore County features the rattlesnakes of Alabama. Rattlers in the park along with all those cuddly critters you've come to expect?

No problem. The snakes will all be safely caged for display except when each one is picked up and "milked" by Ken Darnell of Bioactive Labs, a Tallassee producer of venoms used the world over in medical research. The venom extracted right there in the park will be used in future research intended to develop new drugs of the kind already derived from rattlesnake venoms.

Drugs from rattlesnake venoms? Yes! Life-saving drugs like blood pressure medicines and blood clot bustin' drugs used in emergency rooms world wide for stopping heart attacks and strokes in progress. You just might find there's very good reason to conserve rattlesnakes and other mostly unloved critters usually feared rather than treasured.

Learn about the venomous snakes of Alabama and the best way to avoid ending up on the wrong end of a snake bite. And what to do if you're unlucky enough to get yourself "bit". You might be surprised to hear Ken's first aid recommendations.

Believe it or not, these scaly guests will fit right in with the pet contests, custom cars, helicopter landings and all those lovable, adoptable pups and kittens. Just don't get too close to that helicopter!

"Bark in the Park", Fort Toulouse, Wetumpka, Sunday, September 30, 1:00-5:00 PM benefiting the Humane Society of Elmore County.