

Toad Identification: Bufo Cane Toads vs Native Southern toads



Southern Toad - *Anaxyrus terrestris*

Southern toads are a native species that unfortunately look a lot like the bad Bufo toad. The southern toad is not poisonous; they just taste bad to your pet. Their natural role in the local environment is bug control. The adults are small and grow only to 3.5 inches. They have smaller parotid glands that are positioned parallel and close to the spine. The best identifying feature of the safe southern toad is a bumpy head that is made up of the two short ridges (Cranial Crests) that are between the eyes. Easy ways to remember that these are the good toads is that "bumpy and beautiful" and "ugly is good".



Marine Toad - *Rhinella marina*

Bufo Marine Toad also known as the Cane Toad or Sapo Gigante was originally from the Amazon basin to Southern Texas along the Rio Grande River. They were introduced to Florida to control pest insects at plantations and sugar cane fields. The first attempts to introduce them in South Florida were not successful, but in 1955 an importer accidentally released the species at the Miami Airport and they were able to establish in Florida. These toads are omnivorous and eat just about anything that fit in their mouth. Around the house they love pet food and will eat right out of the bowls. Adult toads are much larger than the native southern toad. Bufo toads have very large parotid glands which angle down onto their shoulders and no bumps between their eyes. They have smooth pretty heads so remember that "pretty is bad".

Symptoms and Treatment of Bufo Toad toxicity: The toad's poison is a contact poison that is absorbed through the mucus membranes of the mouth (gums and tongue). You will see copious drooling, head shaking, crying, and possibly loss of coordination which can lead to convulsions then death. The most reliable indicator that it was a Bufo toad is the dark brick red colored injected gums. The goal of treatment is to remove the toxin from the mouth before any more gets absorbed. Rinse the mouth with water while pointing the head and mouth down so the dog doesn't inhale the water into their lungs. Rub and rinse carefully over and over. If the dog seems fine and the gums are no longer red you should be out of danger. If he is still showing symptoms call your veterinarian immediately and get him to the hospital for further treatment.

Removal of non-native toad species: The Bufo toads are dangerous to native toads and to your pets and should be removed from the environment. You can apply a strip of benzocaine teething, toothache ointment onto the neck and back of the toad. After 20 minutes it should be unconscious and dead within 45 minutes. You can then place them into a plastic baggie and put him in the freezer for 3 days to make sure the toad is dead and not just deeply sleeping. You can then bury him or put him in the trash for disposal.