



# WHAT THE HECK IS THIS?

(PART 2)

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## Common Tiger Snake



This snake is called a Common Tiger Snake. It is mildly poisonous and is usually in the region of 1 metre long. It is mainly active at night. When confronted, the snake will provide a spectacular threatening display. They usually feed on lizards, small birds and mice. If you encounter one of these it is best to call on the wildlife management team to come and assist.

## Agama

This reptile is called a male Agama. It is completely harmless and there is no need for developing an increased heart rate. The female agama is greyish in colour. They usually live on large trees or around the outside of the house and feed mainly on insects. Only in "sci-fi" movies will they attack people. They are harmless and there is no need to panic.



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## Klipsampioen



This mushroom was photographed by a resident living on the Estate. It is called a klipsampioen or 'penny bun' (*Boletus edulis*) and is considered edible. They usually grow alongside termite mounds or areas where there is a lot of underground termite activity.

The climate created inside a termite mound or underground is very favourable for the germination of this particular fungus species. It is good advice to not consume any mushroom other than the ones you can find in your local grocery store. The phrase; "You can eat all mushrooms, however some you will eat only once" is very true.

There are a number of mushrooms that are deadly, so unless you can consider yourself a mushroom specialist, don't eat just any mushroom you can lay your hands on. It is best for mushrooms found in the bush, to be left in the bush!

**...don't eat just any mushroom you can lay your hands on.**

This mushroom was photographed at Duiker str. 22 and it is called a 'rakswam' or bracket fungus. This particular picture is in all probability that of *Bjerkandera adusta*. This mushroom is not edible and usually grows on dead tree trunks. It is best to leave this one alone.





*Vigorous debate has often developed in board rooms where Home Owners Associations have met to decide if cats should be allowed on Eco-Estates or not.*

Currently the Rules and Regulations of the Ledibeng Eco Estate makes provision for pets (cats and dogs) to be kept on the Estate provided the necessary infrastructure is in place to prevent them from roaming uncontrolled. With dogs the concept of containing the animal is possible but when it comes to the issue of containing a cat this arrangement is literally full of holes.

Both cats and dogs have advantages and disadvantages. The particular environment required by these animals should guide the final decision as to which one is better to have, if any. The list below contains some of the advantages and disadvantages of both small dogs and cats.

### **Dogs**

*Advantages of a small dog:*

- It is possible to contain, control and/or restrict a small dog to a certain area and still be able to comply with Municipal regulations. (Municipal regulations specify that boundary fences, palisade or walls be in the region of 1,8 meters tall or less. If higher than 1,8 meters tall Municipal approval is needed.)
- Companionship in the household.
- Generally, most can be trained.
- Ease of handling by means of a leash.
- The food source provided to a small dog can be decided upon by the owner, within reason.
- The droppings of a dog are usually done in plain sight and can easily be seen and cleaned up by the owner.
- Dog food is cheaper than cat food per weight.
- Some dogs will defend the property against intruders or be an alarm system.





## Cats

### *Advantages of a cat:*

- As with small dogs, cats are considered companions within the household.
- Can be trained to a certain extent.
- Cats are considered independent and do not require full time attention or looking after.
- Keep household rodents at bay.

### *Disadvantages of a cat:*

- Cannot be contained and controlled at all times. Even Municipal standards with regard to fencing, walls, palisade, etc. will not restrict the movement of a cat.
- The instinct to hunt and kill is something cats are born with and they will develop and pursue this instinct until the day they die. This instinct is more prevalent at night, but can also be observed during the day.
- This instinct could include and affect different kinds of wildlife such as hares, both baby and adult mongooses, tree squirrels, bush babies, chameleons, nocturnal birds (dikkop, plovers, nightjars and owls) and daytime bird species (doves, forktail drongo, kingfishers, thrush species,

- shrikes, bulbuls, barbets, whydahs), small mammals and even some lizard species. Even cats that are well fed will practise the art of stalking and killing.
- The locations where cats have defecated and urinated are not always easily observed unless you really know what to look for but the strong smell that goes along with this activity is unmistakably real.
- Sexual activities and male confrontations usually happen at night and this will contribute to the noise factor, often large distances from where its home is.
- Male cats will often urinate on floors, tables and furniture to mark their territory.
- Cat food is more expensive than dog food per weight.
- Cats will often claw on furniture, wooden structures, bedding and carpets.
- Cats need veterinary care. Cats are natural vectors for rabies and can host a variety of other diseases and parasites including toxoplasmosis, hookworms, feline immunodeficiency virus, and feline infectious peritonitis.

The pro's and con's of having a small dog or a cat are relatively even and a good arguments can support both sides of the coin when it comes to the best pet to keep. However, from an environmental point of view cats are hard to control and contain, regardless of how tame they are and their instinct to hunt and kill has a negative impact on the wildlife and birds in the surrounding areas. Domestic cats are highly skilled predators, and studies have shown that even when fed daily by humans, cats will continue to hunt wildlife. The statistics in areas where wildlife is abundant have shown that the diet of the ordinary house cat can consist of the following: 60 % small mammals; 20 % birds; 10 % various reptile species and the remaining 10 % is ordinary cat food supplied by the owner. The natural predators for domestic cats in a wildlife environment consist of brown hyena, jackal, caracal and the African python. If these predatory animals are not present in a particular wildlife environment, the species depletion caused by the domestic cat will continue uninterrupted.

The biggest impact a dog will have from an environmental point of view is the droppings often seen all over and the noise aspect that could be prominent, however all of this could be controlled in some way or another. From an environmental point of view the destruction caused by a small dog cannot be compared to that of a domestic cat.



## THE SANGOMA SAYS...

**.....by the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere.**

**.....you don't need to worry about avoiding temptation, as you grow older it will avoid you.**

**.....you're getting old when "getting lucky" means you find your car in the parking lot.**

**..... a man has reached old age when he is cautioned to slow down by his doctor instead of by the traffic police.**