

Venomous or Poisonous?

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to differentiate between the meaning of the words “venomous” and “poisonous” and will be able to name animals in each category.

MATERIALS

- chalkboard or whiteboard (or other writing surface)
- chalk, dry erase pens, or other appropriate writing utensils

BACKGROUND

An animal is venomous if it injects a toxin into an organism via spines, stinging cells, or teeth. An animal is poisonous if the flesh or internal organs are harmful when eaten.

ACTION

1. Discuss the difference between poisonous and venomous. On the board label two columns: VENOMOUS and POISONOUS
2. Have students name all the venomous animals they can think of on one side and all the poisonous animals on the other side. Students can name land animals as well as aquatic animals. Here are some suggestions:

VENOMOUS

box jellyfish
cone snails
stonefishes
stingrays
rattlesnakes
blue-ringed
octopus
honeybee
black widow

POISONOUS

pufferfish
poison dart frogs
shellfish (sometimes)
barracuda (*ciguatera*)

3. Encourage students to search on the Internet or at a library for more animals that fit into these categories.

DEEPER DEPTHS

Due to their potentially lethal adaptations, venomous and poisonous animals are often killed by humans. Choose any of the venomous or poisonous animals that your class has listed and find out what role these animals play in their habitats. Would their ecosystem change if these animals were removed?

