

Humane killing of cane toads

Most of us consider cane toads (*Rhinella marina*) pests; however, they are animals and can suffer pain. They must be handled and killed humanely. In fact, the *Queensland Animal Care and Protection Act, 2001*, makes it unlawful for us to be cruel to cane toads.

The first step is to ensure that you have identified the animal correctly. As an adult, the cane toad is fairly distinctive: it is larger than most native frogs and has a warty, rough skin on its back. However, when the toad is younger and smaller it can appear similar to some native frogs. If in doubt with your identification seek help before killing it.¹

Many methods have been used to kill cane toads but most are considered inhumane by RSPCA Qld. RSPCA Qld recommends two methods, *HopStop*[®] and *Stepped Hypothermia*.

1. HopStop[®]

- Read the instructions on the can carefully before using it and follow them closely.
- Spray the toad twice, leave it for approximately 45-60 minutes, then dispose of the toad in the rubbish bin
- Always dispose of the body; don't leave it lying around because it will still be poisonous to companion animals.

2. Stepped Hypothermia

- Always wear gloves, thick rubber or gardening, when handling toads.
- Pick the toad up firmly, preferably with your hand over its back, place it in a plastic bag or plastic container and secure. Label clearly.
- Now place into your refrigerator (at 4°C) and leave for 12 hours. This does not kill the toad but does anaesthetise it. This length of time is essential and the toad must not be moving when placed in the freezer.
- Next, place the container with the toad into the freezer (-20°C) for at least 24 hours. This last step will painlessly kill the toad.
- Finally, dispose of the body in your wheelie bin. Alternatively you can bury the body, but this must be deep enough so it will not easily be dug up by dogs or native animals.

Remember to wash your hands after each of these steps. Handling of cane toads is best done by adults. Cane toads can also suffer distress from being chased excessively, so try to make their capture and handling as quick as possible.

¹ See http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/wildlife/threats_to_wildlife/cane_toad.html
<http://www.qm.qld.gov.au/Find+out+about/Animals+of+Queensland/Frogs/Cane+Toad>