# RESTRAINT OF SNAKES

## Introduction to restraint

There are several points to consider during the restraint of snakes:

- Be gentle when handling any snakes.
- Some species must be handled with care, even thought they are non-venomous, since they can be very aggressive. These include reticulated pythons and anacondas.
- Large snakes, such as Burmese pythons, should not be handled by one person alone in case of accident.
- Some snakes may defecate during manual restraint so it is advisable for the vent and lower part of the body to be kept in a bag (e.g. pillow case).

## One-handed technique restraint

Most pet snakes are accustomed to some handling so in many instances restraint can be minimal. While the snake is allowed to grip a wrist and forearm, the hand restrains the snake's head at the base of the skull. The other hand is then free.

## Two-handed technique restraint

A snake needs to be supported at a minimum of two points on the body. One person can hold the body and move with the snake as it moves. A second person uses minimal pressure to control the head.

## Transportation

Aggressive snakes should be restrained before they are removed from their transportation bag. This is achieved by holding the head behind the occiput using the thumb and middle finger, while the index finger is placed on top of the head. The larger pythons and anacondas can exceed 6 m in length and 150 kg in weight and are powerful and potentially dangerous. For these animals, a second or even third handler will be required to support the body during the examination. It is usually safer and more convenient to sedate a large pugnacious snake than to struggle on and risk injury to the snake, client or staff.

## Aids to restraint

**Snake hooks**
Snake hooks are commonly used for the restraint of snakes especially venomous species. Experience and care is necessary with their use since damage to the snake is possible.

**Clear plastic tubing**
For particularly aggressive or poisonous snakes clear plastic tubes are very useful. The snake is lifted from its container with a snake hook and placed on the floor. Clear plastic tubing that is just wider than the head of the snake is held in tongs in front of the snake's head. As the snake crawls into the tube, both the tube and the snake are grabbed quickly with the head and upper part of the body within the tube. Openings can be cut into the tube to allow the clinician access to the snake's body for examination or collection of samples. Tubing may not be appropriate for some limber elapids because of the potential for turning within the tubing.