



MEDIA RELEASE

Desert Adders at the Alice Springs Desert Park

Ten new Desert Death Adders were born in captivity at the Alice Springs Desert Park on Good Friday April 6 around 2:30pm.

ASDP Specialist Reptile Keeper, Jochem van der Reijden, said an Easter birth was predicted, so he had been on baby alert for several weeks.

“Desert Death Adders (*Acanthophis pyrrhus*) are one of the most venomous snakes in Australia and the little adders are venomous from the day they are born,” Mr van der Reijden said.

“Unlike many arid zone reptiles Desert Death Adders are not egg layers, they bear live young, after a gestation period of approximately three months.

“The birth of the Easter Adders took about two hours to complete, each baby was born in its own amniotic sac.”

“Ten minutes after birth the babies pierced their sacs, emerging as perfect miniature versions of the parents.”

Mr van der Reijden said the father of the babies was one of the Desert Parks original animals and had been in captivity for over 10 years.

“Unfortunately he succumbed to cancer earlier this year, so the Desert Park keepers were delighted to discover that the female was gravid and that his genes would continue into the future,” Mr van der Reijden said.

“Desert Death Adders are not very common in zoological collections in Australia and are much sought after.

“Without successful breeding such as this it would be necessary to collect wild specimens in order to continue to display them in captivity.

“Once the off-spring are feeding the Desert Park hopes to send the Adders to other ARAZPA (Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria) establishments.

“Sending these animals throughout Australia increases the awareness of arid zone fauna, hopefully encouraging more interested visitors to come to the Northern Territory.”

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Jochem van der Reijden on 08 8951 8788.

Issued: 8am Friday, 13 April 2007