HAY SHEDS AND HEART ATTACKS

by Murray Davies

(Photo: D. Pearson)

PYTHONS are the best form of mice control for stored hay, but I never got over the shock of finding them in my hay shed!

My family have a small property at Northampton and each year we conserve about 500 bales of cereal hay for supplementary feeding. Even though we kept a cat in the shed, we generally threw out the last 40 bales due to mice damage.

Then the snake moved in! In the course of feeding out the bales we would find him everywhere. Once I got over the ritual heart attack, I could pick him up and move him to a spot in the shed where we weren't working. That year we were able to feed out all the hay, there was no mouse damage.

The snake must have hibernated nearby, for next spring he was back again. The snake's life cycle fits in well with hay storage. Hay is moved into the shed in September when the snake wakes up and by the time we have finished feeding it out he is ready to hibernate again. Also, I can conscientiously leave junk heaps around the shed 'for the snake to hibernate in over winter'!

It is a good symbiotic relationship. The snake feeds on our mice and we save $200 to $300 a year on unspoiled hay. In bigger farming operations, the dollar value would be more.

Murray Davies grew up at Northampton and currently manages a farm at Cuballing.

This snake was originally identified for Murray as a Children's Python, but it was more likely a Stimson's Python. Has anyone else got interesting 'snake tales'? - Ed.