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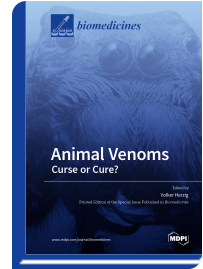
Animal Venoms- Curse or Cure?

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It is estimated that about 15% of all animals spread across the majority of lineages are venomous. Animals use venom for various purposes including prey capture, predator deterrence, sexual combat and the provision of food for their offspring. Humans have always been fascinated by venomous animals, albeit in a Janus-faced way. On the one hand, venomous animals have gained a fearsome reputation in the public media, which is further boosted by an annual global death toll in the hundreds of thousands (with many more cases of permanent disablement) with the leading cause being tropical snakes. For this reason, snake envenomation has recently been classified by the World Health Organization as a neglected tropical disease. On the other hand, a growing global scene of enthusiasts in industrialized countries is keeping venomous animals such as snakes, spiders, scorpions, and centipedes in captivity as pets. The (also venomous) honeybees are even used as production animals in agriculture for the pollination of a wide variety of crops, which ensures the survival of billions of people and has the added benefit of yielding delicious honey. Furthermore, recent scientific research focused on exploiting animal venoms for the benefit of humanity in form of novel therapeutics or biopesticides.



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