

Florida Invader: Cane Toad¹

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Figure 1. Cane toad (*Rhinella marina*), also known as the “bufo” toad or marine toad.
Credits: Steve A. Johnson, University of Florida

Cane toads are native to South and Central America and have become established in central and southern Florida. The poison glands on the shoulders of cane toads produce toxins that can kill pets or make them very ill. Native southern toads and oak toads also have these glands, but their toxins are much less potent and are harmless to pets. Toads live on the ground and have stout bodies and dry,

warty skin. Adult toads can be identified using the tips in the bulleted lists below—remember that body color can vary a lot. Native southern toads and invasive cane toads both lay long strings of eggs, and it is nearly impossible to tell their eggs and young apart. Cane toads should be humanely euthanized by applying 20% benzocaine gel to the toad’s belly and then freezing the toad.

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For more information on cane toads, visit <http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/canetoad.shtml>. Photos by Steve A. Johnson, UF/IFAS Extension.

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How do I know if I have found a dangerous cane toad or a harmless native toad?

First, be sure it is a toad, then read on below to identify the species.

Toads

- Live on the ground, and don't climb walls
- Have stout bodies
- Have dry, warty skin
- Have poison glands on their shoulders

Cane Toad—Invasive

- Can be larger than three inches (young are smaller)
- Poison glands are large and somewhat triangular, tapering back to a point
- No knobs or ridges on top of the head



Figure 2. Invasive cane toads have very large poison glands on their shoulders—these glands are somewhat triangular, tapering back to a point.

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Southern Toads—Native

- Rarely larger than 3 inches
- Poison glands are small and oval; no danger to pets
- Two obvious ridges on head end in knobs

Oak Toads—Native

- *Never* larger than 1.75 inches
- Poison glands are tiny and oval; no danger to pets
- No knobs or ridges on top of the head

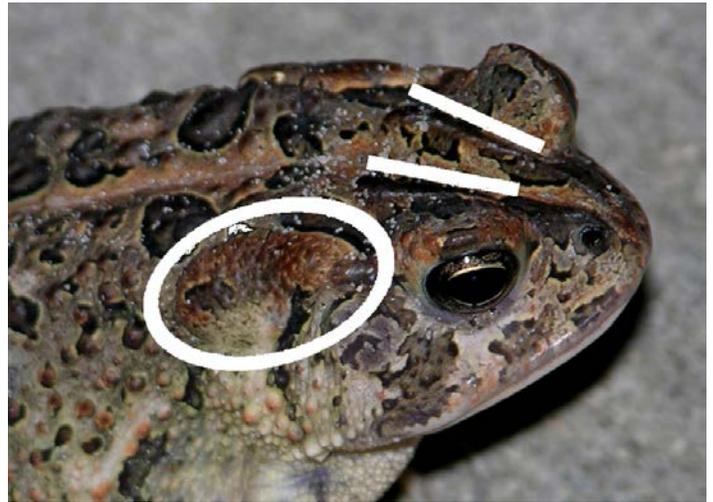


Figure 3. Native southern toads (*Anaxyrus terrestris*) have small, oval glands on their shoulders and a pair of raised ridges or crests on top of their heads.



Figure 4. Native oak toads (*Anaxyrus terrestris*) are very small toads, and have tiny, oval glands on their shoulders.

Additional Information

For more information on cane toads, visit <http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/frogs/canetoad.shtml>.