



Introduction to Corn Snake Care

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The corn snake is a slender, mid-size colubrid typically growing to 4-6 feet in length. Thanks to captive breeding and genetics, corn snakes can have a wide variety of color variations and scale patterns! They are native to the southeastern and central United States. Corn snakes average 10-15 years in captivity.

Housing

Hatchling corn snakes will do well in a 10-gallon reptile tank **with a locking lid**. They are notorious escape artists! Juveniles do well in 30" x 12" enclosures (equivalent to a 20L reptile tank), and an adult corn snake needs an enclosure that is at least 36 inches (3 feet) long and 18 inches wide (the equivalent of a "40Breeder" reptile tank), although larger is always better. They prefer to have hiding places and low branches to climb, as well as a substrate to burrow in. Your corn snake should have a water dish that is large enough for them to fit their body into when it is coiled. Fresh water should be provided daily or whenever your snake defecates in it (this is very common)! Their water dish should be sanitized at least once per week.

Corn snakes are an active species that like to burrow and explore low branches or shrubs. It is necessary to give them substrate that is deep enough to burrow in (at least a couple of inches). Aspen shavings that are geared toward reptiles (NOT pine or cedar) work very well for corn snakes as they will not retain too much humidity and it is easy to clean. Recycled paper bedding can also be a good option. Corn snakes tend to defecate more often than a lot of other snake species, sometimes even twice per week. The substrate should always be spot cleaned as soon as your snake defecates and completely changed out at least once per month.



Temperature & Lighting

Corn snakes are native to the southeastern and central United States, so they do not require tropical and humid parameters. The basking temperature (the hottest spot in the tank) should reach 85–90 degrees Fahrenheit, with the warm side of the tank averaging 80–82 degrees F, and the cool side of the tank between 75–78 degrees F. These temperatures can be met using a daytime basking bulb, a ceramic heat emitter (CHE), or an under-the-tank heating mat (ALWAYS on a thermostat). We recommend using a dimmer on your basking bulbs and a thermostat for CHEs and heat mats so that you have better control of the heat being emitted. At night, the temperature can decrease to 65–68 degrees safely. This can be achieved either with a CHE or a reptile heating mat (ALWAYS on a thermostat).

Whether snakes truly benefit from UVB lighting is still being studied and is a bit controversial. However, it has been noted that some snakes are more active and have better feeding responses when provided with UVB lighting during the day. A UVB of 5% is adequate. Linear bulbs (such as the Arcadia UVB T5 or T8 bulb) tend to have a longer-lasting, higher UVB output than the coil (or compact) bulbs. Compact bulbs should be replaced every 3–6 months and linear bulbs should be replaced every 8–10 months, regardless of whether they are emitting visible light. ALWAYS USE A RELIABLE THERMOMETER IN YOUR ENCLOSURE (Infrared heat guns are a great tool to use to get temperature readings of multiple areas in the enclosure).

NOTE: If your snake is avoiding using their basking area, they may be too warm during the day, and you may need to adjust your heat sources. Likewise, if your snake is only utilizing their basking area, it may be too cold in the other areas of the tank.

Humidity

The humidity in your enclosure should be approximately 40%, which can typically be accomplished by simply providing your corn snake with a large water dish. Never allow the substrate to become waterlogged, as this can become a breeding ground for bacteria, and cause bacterial infections and respiratory illness.

Diet

Corn snakes will eat rodents in captivity. Frozen thawed mice are going to be the safest option for feeding. Hatchling snakes can eat one prey item every 5–7 days, juveniles every 7–10 days, and adults every 10–14 days. The girth of the prey should be equal to the widest girth of your snake. You can offer your rodent meal on a flat dish to minimize ingestion of substrate.

Note: Your snake should be eating regularly before you bring them home.

Handling

Juvenile corn snakes can be wiggly, nippy, and fast! They will even rattle their tail like a rattlesnake if they feel startled or threatened. They do, however, tend to calm down as they grow and are known to be a docile (but food motivated) species.

It is important to give your snake at least a few days to get used to its new environment before handling it. It's even better if you allow them to eat at least two meals in their new home before regular handling. At first, keep your interactions short and sweet. Always pick your snake up from underneath (front-opening enclosures work well for handling as they allow you to approach from the side rather than from the top). Allow your snake to calm down in your hands, "walking" it from one hand to the other slowly. This allows your snake to recognize that you're not a predator and build up to longer interactions. Always handle your snake close to the ground, as dropping them can cause serious injury. Avoid handling your snake for at least 24 hours after they have eaten, allowing them to properly digest their meal.

Preventive Care

Monitoring the temperature and cleanliness of your snake's enclosure will help them maintain good health. To optimize your snake's health, make the following part of your daily routine:

- Check the enclosure temperature at least once daily or more often when the enclosure is first set up and during seasonal changes.
- Check for cleanliness on a weekly basis and remove feces and shed skin. Clean the enclosure completely once a month.
- Regularly check that the enclosure is secure with latches, knobs, etc.
- Keep notes about your snake's feeding (i.e. size of the meal, and if the meal was eaten/refused).

We recommend a yearly wellness exam for your snake to ensure optimum health at all life stages.