

Corn snake

Care Sheet



The corn snake is native to the dry scrublands and forests of the USA. It preys on mice, birds, and amphibians and is remarkably camouflaged with its surroundings. To ensure that your corn snake's life resembles its natural habitat, it is crucial to consider several factors: providing a suitable environment, maintaining a healthy diet, housing it separately from other snakes, promoting normal behaviour, and protecting it from harm. Corn snakes are kind and gentle, and they are non-venomous. You will typically find them active around dawn and dusk.

Enclosure

When selecting a safe and secure vivarium for your corn snake, it is crucial to ensure that it is strong and escape-proof, as corn snakes are known for being excellent escape artists. The doors should be difficult to open for them, and adding a lock can help keep your corn snake securely inside its enclosure. Proper ventilation is essential; the vents shouldn't be so large that the snake can escape through openings, but it should still allow for adequate airflow to eliminate harmful bacteria and maintain a good supply of oxygen.

The size of the vivarium is also very important. It should be at least as long as your corn snake. If you are starting with a young snake, bear in mind that the enclosure will need to be smaller and grow larger as your snake grows. However, avoid placing very small snakes in much larger enclosures, as this can cause them significant stress.

Get to know

Getting to know your corn snake is significant. You need to learn its likes and dislikes and be able to recognise when your snake is in distress or ill. Understanding these aspects will make things easier for both you and your corn snake. It's essential to ensure that they feel safe and loved at all times. Building a bond is crucial, as the corn snake will learn your scent and recognise you as its protector.

When you first acquire a corn snake, it is important to allow it some time to destress and acclimate to its new environment. Handling them and aiding them in becoming accustomed to human presence is essential, but take care not to overdo it too soon.

Temperature

Corn snakes are cold-blooded animals, which means they need to live in a warm environment to regulate their body temperature. Creating a basking zone in your vivarium is ideal, but it should be located at one end of the enclosure, as they also need a cooler area to retreat to when necessary. Using heat lamps with safety guards is recommended, as they provide adequate heat while preventing any potential injury to your corn snake. Make sure to monitor the temperature with a thermometer; the heat lamp should maintain a temperature between 28 °C and 30 °C.

LIFESPAN

15 to 20
years in
captivity

SIZE

150cm
(5ft)

TEMPERATURE

Hot end: 28 °C - 30 °C
Cold end: 20 °C - 24 °C

HUMIDITY

40% - 50%

Environment

Substrate: Provide your corn snake with bedding that mimics its natural habitat. The best option is a mixture of soil and sand, allowing enough depth for them to burrow and adding dry leaf litter on top to help maintain humidity and offer exploration opportunities.

Décor: Decoration is a crucial aspect of a corn snake's enclosure, as it encourages exercise and stimulates their natural instincts. Additionally, it should offer your corn snake a place to hide and feel secure.

Cleaning: It is essential to keep your enclosure clean. Promptly spot clean your vivarium whenever you notice waste. Additionally, all substrates must be replaced at least once a month, and the enclosure must be thoroughly cleaned using reptile-safe disinfectant. This practice helps reduce health risks for both your corn snake.



Diet

Feeding: A corn snake's diet is extremely important for their health and strength. In captivity, corn snakes primarily eat mice and, in some cases, very small rats, which can be found at pet shops. The size of the prey should depend on the size of your corn snake. As a general guideline, offer prey that is slightly wider than the widest part of the snake's body. It's recommended to use feeding tongs to give them food, preventing them from associating your hand with feeding. Young corn snakes should be fed every 5 to 6 days. As they grow older and larger, their feeding frequency can change to every 7 to 14 days.

Water: Ensure your corn snake has access to fresh water daily. Provide a sufficiently large bowl so that your snake can bathe in it if desired. Be aware that corn snakes may occasionally relieve themselves in their water bowl, so it's important to change the water as soon as possible if that happens.

Snakes weight

Snakes can sometimes become either overweight or underweight, and you can determine this by examining the shape of their body. If you notice that the snake's body has a very triangular shape and its spine is visible, it indicates that the snake is underweight. On the other hand, if the snake's body appears completely round, it is likely overweight. The goal is to find a healthy balance in between these two.

Corn snake weight and shape



Too skinny



Just right



Too big



Health & Welfare

A healthy corn snake should have clear eyes, smooth and firm skin, a clean vent, and exhibit an active and alert demeanour. It should also eat and drink normally, have good muscle tone, and show awareness of its surroundings.

If you suspect your snake is unwell, the best course of action is to take it to a veterinarian. Avoid attempting to remove anything from its skin or inserting anything into its body, as this could cause further damage and pain.

Shedding

Every so often, a snake will shed its skin in one large piece. This process indicates that the snake is growing. Younger snakes shed their skin more frequently, but the shedding slows down as they reach their full size.

You can tell when a snake is going to shed because its skin will become dull in colour, and its eyes will appear glazed over with a white film. During this time, it is best to avoid handling them. If you notice that the shed skin around their eyes (eye caps) hasn't fully come off, it's essential to remove it as soon as possible, since leaving it on can create problems.

If the shed skin hasn't come off in one piece and parts are still attached to the snake's body, do not pull them off. Instead, soak the snake in a lukewarm bath to soften the remaining skin, and it will fall off. If shedding issues occur frequently, it may indicate a problem with your snake's heat and humidity levels, and you should address this as soon as possible.



Diseases and Concerns

Corn snakes can develop various health issues, so it's important to watch for any signs that seem unusual. One common problem is constipation, which can be identified by swelling near the tail. To help a constipated corn snake, you can place it in lukewarm water, which may assist with passing the blockage. If this doesn't resolve the issue, it's crucial to take your snake to a veterinarian.

Another concern is mites, which are tiny black parasites that feed on the blood of corn snakes. Mites typically lay their eggs in the substrate of the snake's enclosure and can often be found around the eyes, mouth, and beneath the scales. Regularly cleaning and disinfecting the tank should help eliminate these pests.

It's essential to take the time to research the potential diseases that can affect corn snakes. If you acquire a corn snake, monitor its health daily and consult a reptile veterinarian immediately if you notice any of the aforementioned issues.

Transport

When taking your animals out with you, you must ensure their travel box is safe for them. Ensure there is enough room for your corn snake to sit comfortably, but not so much that they can be knocked around. If they are new to travel, then even putting them in a cloth bag so that there is darkness to help calm them. Make sure it is well ventilated, but make sure there's no escape. Heat is vital; bring a battery heat pack or a hot water bottle to help provide heat so they stay comfortable.

Corn Snake

