



WEIRD 'N' WONDERFUL

Pets and reptiles

Introduction Guide To The Care Of

Corn Snakes

Scientific Name: *Elaphe Guttata Guttata/ Pantherophis Guttatus Guttatus*

Life Span: 10-20 years in captivity

Size: 4ft-6ft

Appearance: Corn snakes are a relatively small snake from the colubridae family. They come in a range of different morphs, in a variety of colours, but normal (Carolina) corns are bright red to bright orange with black markings.

Temperament and Handling: With the odd exception, Corn Snakes are calm, docile, placid snakes that are hardy and thrive very well in captivity. Due to their temperament Corn Snakes are a recommended first snake to keep as they are relatively easy to care for and they also do not grow as large as other breeds of snake. Corn Snakes make great pets as they are highly unlikely to bite and have pleasant personalities. If threatened their first response is to hide, rather than strike and they will occasionally warn of predators with a little tail rattling. If your Corn Snake rattles it's tail this is nothing to worry about, just take steps to ensure that your Corn Snake feels secure and continue with regular handling until they become used to you and know that you are not a threat to them. Corn Snakes are quite active snakes and will appreciate time outside the vivarium to exercise. Care should be taken to avoid dropping your Corn Snake whilst handling, so support your Corn Snake at all times. Approximately 10-15 minutes 3-4 times a week is a suitable amount of time for handling your Corn Snake, but this may vary depending on the particular snake. Some Corn Snakes will appreciate more time outside the vivarium, while others may shy away from regular handling. It is important for hygiene reasons to wash your hands with a good anti-bacterial handwash before and after you handle your snake. This is especially important if you have multiple specimens, so has not to pass on any infections between your snakes. Anti-bacterial hand sanitisers are widely available and are useful to have close to your vivarium for quick and regular hand cleaning.



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Housing: Corn Snakes are not highly active and do not need huge enclosures. A medium sized vivarium (Even a fish tank with a tight fitting lid) will house your Corn Snake nicely. The vivarium should allow a minimum of 1 square foot of floor space to each foot of snake and be approximately a third of the snake's length in height. Hatchlings should start out in an appropriately sized small vivarium as they can become stressed and stop feeding in an oversized vivarium. Corn Snakes are excellent escape artists, so care must be taken when planning their housing. Make sure your vivarium or tank has a tight fitting lid, which can be clamped down. Corn snakes are very strong and can push a loose fitting lid from a vivarium. All Corn Snakes need somewhere to hide and may become stressed if this is not provided. This could be a cardboard box, a toilet roll tube or a upturned plant pot that can be easily replaced if it becomes soiled. Any hide should be just large enough for your Corn Snake to curl up in; if it is too large the snake will not feel as secure. It is advised to place at least two hides in your vivarium so that your Corn snake will have a place to hide in both the warm and cool end of the tank. Corn Snakes are relatively easy to care for, as they defecate rarely, so with regular spot cleaning a full vivarium clean out should only be necessary every 3-5 weeks. When you clean out the housing, disinfect the cage furniture and the inside of the vivarium with a weak disinfectant solution or a reptile safe product. In general, if a disinfectant is safe to use for disinfecting baby bottles, then it is weak enough to use with snakes. Completely dry the contents before replacing in the vivarium with fresh substrate. For hygiene reasons it is advised to use separate towels and cleaning cloths for your snakes.

Heating and Lighting: Corn Snakes are cold blooded and get heat from their surroundings. In the wild snakes bask in the sun to keep warm or move to a shady spot if they are too hot, this is called thermo-regulation. The ideal temperature for you snake's vivarium is a temperature gradient of 21-30°C (70-86°F) Your corn snake does not require light 24 hours a day or uv light, and can suffer from stress if the light exposure is too long. It is recommended to keep your corn snake in a natural light pattern that mimics normal daytime, It's useful when using either method to have a small thermometer on each end of the vivarium to check the temperature. Place the thermometers near the hides on top of the substrate as this is where your Corn snake will spend the majority of it's time. One end should be around 30°C and the other around 21°C. Checking temperatures regularly is advised to ensure that your Corn Snake can thermo-regulate by moving around the tank

Humidity and Hydration: Corn Snakes do not require a specific humidity level, but may appreciate a light misting of their vivarium to aid them during the shedding process. Ensure that you do not allow the humidity to reach too high a level as this may cause your Corn Snake to develop an R.I (Respiratory Infection).



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Feeding: Corn Snakes feed on mice appropriate to the size of their mouth. A prey item should be approximately the same width as one and a half times the size of the corn snakes head. Hatchling Corn Snakes start on pink mice, one every 5-6 days and graduate up to an adult mouse every 7-14 days as they grow. Very large snakes may require 2 adult mice per feed. You may also feed your Corn Snake on chicks and fertilized quail eggs to provide a variation in diet, although these are not recommended as a staple diet as these will not contain all the beneficial nutrients and minerals that rodents have. Larger Corn Snakes will also take other small rodents such as gerbils, hamsters and young rats. Do not feed your snake with live food, even a small mouse may bite or injure your snake. Shop brought frozen rodents are available from most pet shops or bought over the internet these can be thawed to room temperature and make an excellent all round food for your snake. Wild rodents carry parasites and should be avoided at all times. Never handle your snake straight after a feed, as it will regurgitate its meal. It is advisable to wait 48 hours after a feed before handling your snake. Feeding your Corn Snake outside the Vivarium is recommended to ensure that no substrate is ingested along with the prey item. If a Corn Snake ingests large amounts of it's substrate then it can lead to your snake becoming impacted and ill. If your snake is reluctant to feed, which is unlikely in a Corn Snake, then there are a few techniques you can try to encourage your snake to feed. One of these is 'braining' the mouse. Snakes are attracted to the scent of brain matter, so if you cut into the skull of the mouse to expose the brain tissue, then they are more likely to take the food item.

Please note that this is only an introductory guide based on our opinions and experience, we advise you to continually research and learn as much as possible from as many sources as you can, every animal is different and new care and information is always being developed and found 😊