

Corn Snake



Pantherophus guttatus

With their generally docile temperament, manageable size, and ease of care, corn snakes make one of the best choices for a beginner snake. Native to the eastern and southeastern United States, these active little snakes range from 3 to 6 feet long, live up to 20 years, and are available in a myriad of colors and patterns.

Housing

Size

Baby corn snakes (9-14 inches) can be quite small and don't require an excessive amount of room; an enclosure as small as a 5 gallon tank can be sufficient to house a baby. For an adult corn snake (2.5 feet or larger), a 20 gallon tank would be adequate. The enclosure should be large enough to accommodate, at minimum, a water dish and a hide box with some extra room for your snake to explore and exercise. You'll want to make sure you have the correct screen top for your tank and some clips to hold it down to prevent an escape.

Substrate

Many substrates are available for corn snakes. Many are wood based like aspen shavings, cypress mulch, or bark chips. Other options are fir and sphagnum peat moss, coconut fiber, or cage carpet. We recommend staying away from anything sandy or clay-like. Substrates such as coconut husk and cypress mulch have the added benefit of retaining moisture well and resisting mold, but make poor burrowing choices. Aspen makes a good choice to allow for burrowing behavior and may mask some odors, but will not retain moisture. Cage carpet is easy to clean, but doesn't do much for maintaining humidity and will not allow for burrowing.

Lighting

While corn snakes are diurnal, they don't have the UVB requirements that many other reptiles do. They get much of their vitamin D3 from their food. That said, a UVB lamp will not harm your corn snake and may serve to brighten the enclosure so you can better view it.



Some products to look for

- Zoo Med Precision Analog Thermometer
- Zilla Halogen Mini Dome Heat Lamp
- Zoo Med ReptiRock Water Dish
- Exo Terra Mini Mister Hand Sprayer
- Zoo Med Natural Cork Rounds
- Zilla Jungle Mix Fir and Sphagnum Peat Moss
- Zoo Med Deluxe Collapsible Snake Hook
- Exo Terra Buffalo Skull
- Zoo Med Deluxe 10" Feeding Tongs



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Temperature

There are several options for keeping your corn snake's enclosure at the proper temperature. Heat lamps are a great option, with a variety of types and wattages to suit your needs. Heat pads are another option, but they require a greater substrate depth to prevent possible burns. Even with increased substrate depth, a corn snake may burrow and get too close to the heat pad; use them with caution. Heat rocks are not recommended. The temperature in your corn snake's enclosure should fall between 75°F and 85°F.

Humidity

Corn snakes do not require a constantly maintained level of humidity; however, they will require increased moisture in order to shed properly. Corn snakes, like all reptiles, shed periodically in order to grow. Around the time your corn snake is getting ready to shed you'll notice its color will dull and its eyes will take on a blue-milky color. When this occurs, it's time to increase the humidity. This is usually done by misting the enclosure as frequently as every day until your corn snake has shed. Make sure to provide a decoration with a rough surface to help facilitate shedding. If the correct humidity is not maintained during the period, your corn snake will have difficulty shedding and a fragmented or partial shed may result. Another problem to watch out for is when your corn snake retains the skin over its eyes after a shed. The retained skin is referred to as an "eye cap". This is not a major concern after a single shed, but if the problem persists through several sheds, it may be up to you to remove the eye caps. The process can be tricky and dangerous for the snake so prevention is best medicine.

Diet

Rodents

Corn snakes are carnivores; in the wild they subsist on a diet of lizards and frogs as babies and graduate to larger prey like mice, rats, birds, and bats. In captivity they will do fine on a diet of strictly rodents. Corn snakes are not known to be difficult feeders and baby corns usually readily accept the appropriately sized pinkie. As your corn snake grows, its food should grow with it until you eventually end up feeding adult mice, or in rare circumstances, small rats. We recommend feeding only frozen/thawed prey. Frozen/thawed prey is safer for the snake because dead prey can't bite defensively and cause your corn snake harm, and it's safer for you because it can help prevent your corn snake from developing a strong feeding response that can result in an accidental bite. In some cases, a corn snake may refuse frozen/thawed prey. In these instances it may be necessary to offer live prey, but tease feeding frozen/thawed prey with a set of feeding tongs should be attempted first.



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Pet Kare II

250 Pencader Plaza

Newark, De 19713

P: 302-733-0740

F: 302-733-0745

www.mypetkare.com