

Medusa Exotics

CARE INFORMATION SHEET

CORN SNAKE (*elaphe guttata*)

Also known as the red rat snake, this species is native to North America, and kills its prey by constriction. Average adult size is 1.2 to 1.8 metres, life span in captivity can be as much as 20 years. Docile in temperament and available in a range of attractive colours, these snakes are very popular as pets.

Housing

You will need to provide a secure, well ventilated vivarium for your snake. This can be either wooden with glass doors, or entirely glass. Some snake hobbyists keep their snakes in appropriately sized plastic contico boxes on racking systems. A general guide as to the required size is to ensure that the diagonal measurement of the enclosure is greater than half the length of the snake. Cover the bottom of the enclosure with a dry substrate such as aspen. Fresh clean water should be available at all times in a suitably sized water bowl that is not easily tipped over. Provide a couple of snug hides or caves for the snake to rest and hide in, ideally one at each end of the thermal gradient. Many snakes appreciate a log or branch to climb on, this will depend on the size and layout of your vivarium, try to avoid creating too much clutter. Snakes are surprisingly adept at finding a way out so make sure you do not make this easy. Small hatchling snakes do not need to be housed in a large vivarium and you would do well to avoid placing a small hatchling in a tank with sliding doors as they can squeeze through the gap where the doors overlap.

Temperature and humidity

It is of vital importance to provide a thermal gradient within the vivarium, like all reptiles snakes are cold blooded and they need to maintain their body temperature by using the environment around them. You therefore need to provide a warm side and a cooler side to enable the snake to regulate its temperature. For a corn snake the ideal is 28c at the warm side, with a basking spot reaching 32c, and 25c at the coolest side. At night time the temperature can be dropped to 22c – 25c. The equipment you need to use to achieve the correct temperatures will depend on the size and type of housing, please ask for advice when purchasing your set-up. You do not need to provide high levels of humidity, but just prior to shedding the skin the snake will appreciate a light daily misting spray to aid shedding.

Feeding

Corn snakes require a diet of appropriately sized rodents which can be supplied frozen from your dealer. Once a week is the recommended frequency for feeding. As a general rule the body thickness of the rodent should be slightly less than the body thickness of the snake. Use a plastic tub (which should not be used for any other purpose) and place the frozen mouse in the tub with some hot water until it is defrosted and slightly warm, you can then offer it to the snake using a pair of tongs or tweezers. Never use your fingers as the snake is likely to strike. Prior to shedding the skin, many snakes will refuse to feed for a week or two, this is normal.

General care advice

Cleanliness of the vivarium is important for the snake's health and also to prevent odour. Spot clean as soon as you notice any excrement, and replace the substrate regularly. You can purchase reptile-friendly disinfectant from our shop. Handle your snake gently, little and often to start with and you will soon have a docile pet. A bite from a corn snake is not major, they are not venomous snakes, and they are known for their gentle nature. If you care for your snake well it should have very little trouble with its health, if you do have any concerns you should contact a vet as soon as you can, do not leave it until it is too late.

