

Cornsnake Caresheet

Corn snakes are native to the Southeastern US. Captive bred snakes are often healthier, have fewer parasites, and are much easier to tame. Corn snakes hatch at 8-12 inches in length and can reach 4-5.5 feet. Corn snakes can live well into their 20s.

Enclosure: Keep only one snake per enclosure. House in a 40 gallon or larger enclosure. Newspaper or paper towels are great for new snakes or snakes in medical treatment. We recommend eco earth (coco husk) or topsoil for loose substrate. Do not use cedar, walnut or pine bedding as the strong smell and oils in these woods can be irritating. The dust of most wood shavings can cause problems in snakes and often dehydrate reptiles. Shavings can also be swallowed while the snake is eating and cause GI obstructions. A dark tight hiding place should be provided for security. Snakes should always have fresh water available in a dish large enough for them to soak in that cannot be tipped over.

Temperature: The temperature should range from 85F in the warm end of the cage to 71-75F in the cool end during the day, dropping down to 70F at night. Use a digital thermometer to monitor. A heat lamp should be used and set off to one side to give the enclosure a temperature gradient. All heat sources should be regulated by a thermostat. Do not use heat pads or hot rocks as they can easily cause thermal burns.

Humidity: Humidity should be kept at 40-60%. Shedding occurs as the snake increases in size, in adults usually every 2-4 months. Usually the eyes will cloud over several days before they shed, and at this time an otherwise gentle snake can become aggressive due to decreased vision and likely discomfort. Do not expect them to eat at this time. The shed should come off in one or two pieces. Problems occur in animals with low humidity. A common problem with this is retained eye caps, or spectacles. We do not recommend you try to remove them, as the corneas of the eyes are easily damaged this way. Please contact us or schedule an appointment with your veterinarian if this problem occurs. Always check the shed to make sure the eye caps and the end of the tail are with it.

Lighting: Do not use any colored lighting. White basking light or non light producing heat sources only. We recommend providing them with 12 hours of UVB lighting during the day to come out and bask in as they choose to. At night, make sure lights are off.

Diet: Avoid handling new snakes until they have eaten at least once. As adults these snakes do fine being fed one appropriately sized meal every 1-2 weeks. It is better to feed smaller items but in greater numbers, than something too big. Appropriate meal items include pre-killed rodents and small birds. Live rodents can bite and severely wound snakes. If a snake goes off feed there is always a reason for it. Some snakes have decreased appetite during hibernation season,

regardless of the temperature or during the breeding season. Contact us or consult a veterinarian if your snake skips more than 2 meals.

Vet care: Snakes can be very good at hiding illness. We recommend a physical exam, CBC, chemistries, and fecal float yearly and for new snakes. Weighing your pet at home can be a good way to catch illnesses early. Please bring them in to see a vet if their weight changes by 10%, or more. Common problems are anorexia (not eating), cancer, intestinal obstruction, constipation, stomatitis (mouth rot), incorrect husbandry, upper respiratory problems, pneumonia, and intestinal parasites. Remember with any disease processes, the sooner we see the animal, the more successful we are at treating them! For those in Western Washington we recommend Pine Tree Veterinarian in Maple Valley, or Blue Pearl in Tacoma for emergencies.