



A BETTER LIFE FOR EXOTIC PETS

CORN SNAKE CARE GUIDE

Native to: Mainly found in the southeastern and central states in North America.

Habitat: Overgrown fields, woodlands or abandoned buildings.

Behaviour: Mostly nocturnal, they are not overly active during the day. Calm and docile, but can be fast-moving.

Social: Solitary.

Size: Males generally are 3-4ft long, whereas females can grow to 4-5ft. Slender build.

Lifespan: Anywhere up to 20-30 years.



ANATOMY

Two of what?

Males have two sexual organs called hemipenes, that can fertilise a female, depending on what side the female is to the male.

Rattle Snakes:

Corn snakes will vibrate their tail against its surroundings to create a rattle effect when they feel threatened.

Smelling Tongues:

Like all snakes, corns flick their tongue to pick up particles in the air, and process them within their Jacobson's organ - basically smelling their surroundings

Shedding Skin:

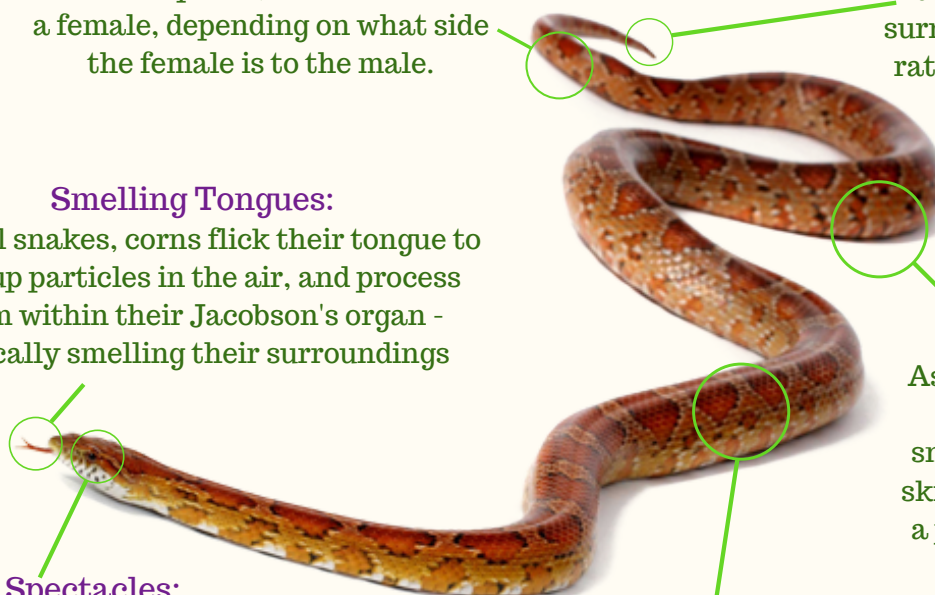
As they grow and heal old injuries, corn snakes will shed their skin in one go, creating a perfect layer of skin that slides off.

Spectacles:

Corn snakes do not have eyelids, but they do have special scales that protect their eyes called spectacles. The scales come off with every shed cycle as normal.

Wide Variety:

Corn snakes are extremely diverse in colours and patterns. These are called morphs.



DIETS

Corn Snakes are fully carnivorous. They are typically fed on a diet of rodents that can be purchased frozen and thawed for feeding. Alternative prey items can be included for variety, however this is not necessary and should be done infrequently. Prey items should be no wider than the largest part of the snake's body.

I feed according to condition, but generally adults are fed a large mouse every 14 days.

FEEDER OPTIONS



Mice:

These should make up the bulk of your snakes diet. They contain more fat than protein, which works well with corn snakes due to their high activity and fast metabolisms.



Rats:

These may be introduced to picky eaters, but are not needed and can cause obesity if fed often. They have a higher protein content which is more suited to heavy-bodied snakes.



Chicks:

These may be fed as an occasional treat, no more than once or twice a year. They are messy to feed and will need to have the beak and legs cut off to prevent damage to the snake.



Quail Eggs:

These may be used as a treat, no more than once or twice a year. Some snakes will not take these due to the lack of scent - so they may need rubbing on another prey item before feeding.

FEEDING FROZEN/THAWED

Feeding frozen/thawed is the recommended method for a corn snake.

Prey must be fully defrosted in the fridge before offering to your snake and you will see a better feeding response if the prey animal is warm. You can do this by submerging it in a plastic bag in warm water or blowing with a warm-heated hairdryer.

Corn snakes are opportunistic feeders, so will usually take food when it's offered even if it's not needed. It's therefore important not to overfeed, as obesity in corn snakes is very common and will shorten their life-span.

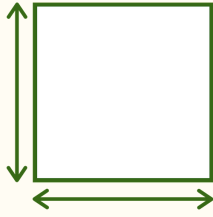
I defrost my feeders over the day in a bag in the fridge, and warm with a hair dryer before offering to the snake using tongs.

DO NOT HANDLE YOUR SNAKE FOR 48HOURS AFTER FEEDING TO AVOID REGURGITATION

WATER

Clean, fresh water should be available at all times in the enclosure. Provide a water dish large enough for the snake to soak in if it wants to, and change daily.

ENCLOSURES



Space:

You need enough space for the snake to stretch out fully, with at least 1ft of height to allow them some climbing space.

We use a 4x1x1ft wooden vivarium for a 3ft adult male corn snake.



Lighting:

They need a day and night cycle and will benefit from using a low-level UVB light on during daylight hours.

We use a 2ft UVB tube at 5% for our corn snakes. A caged, compact 5% UVB bulb will also be suitable.



Temperature:

They do best with an overhead heat source at 32°C, with a cooler area to allow them to thermoregulate safely.

We use a halogen heat bulb, on a dimming thermostat, at one end of the enclosure.



Humidity:

Corn snakes are tolerant of humidity fluctuation, but do best at 30-60%.

UK humidity is normally perfect for corn snakes, so nothing needs doing to correct it. A moss hide, can be used when shedding.



Substrate:

Aspen or lignocel are brilliant, simple options that suit corn snakes well. A top soil/play sand mix can be used too.

We use lignocel for our corn snakes as it's simple and inexpensive.



Decor:

Space to both climb, bask burrow and hide will benefit a corns varied activities. Minimum of two hides either end and branches and plant cover.

Please see examples page.

MAINTENANCE

Remove poo and urates daily - check throughout substrate.

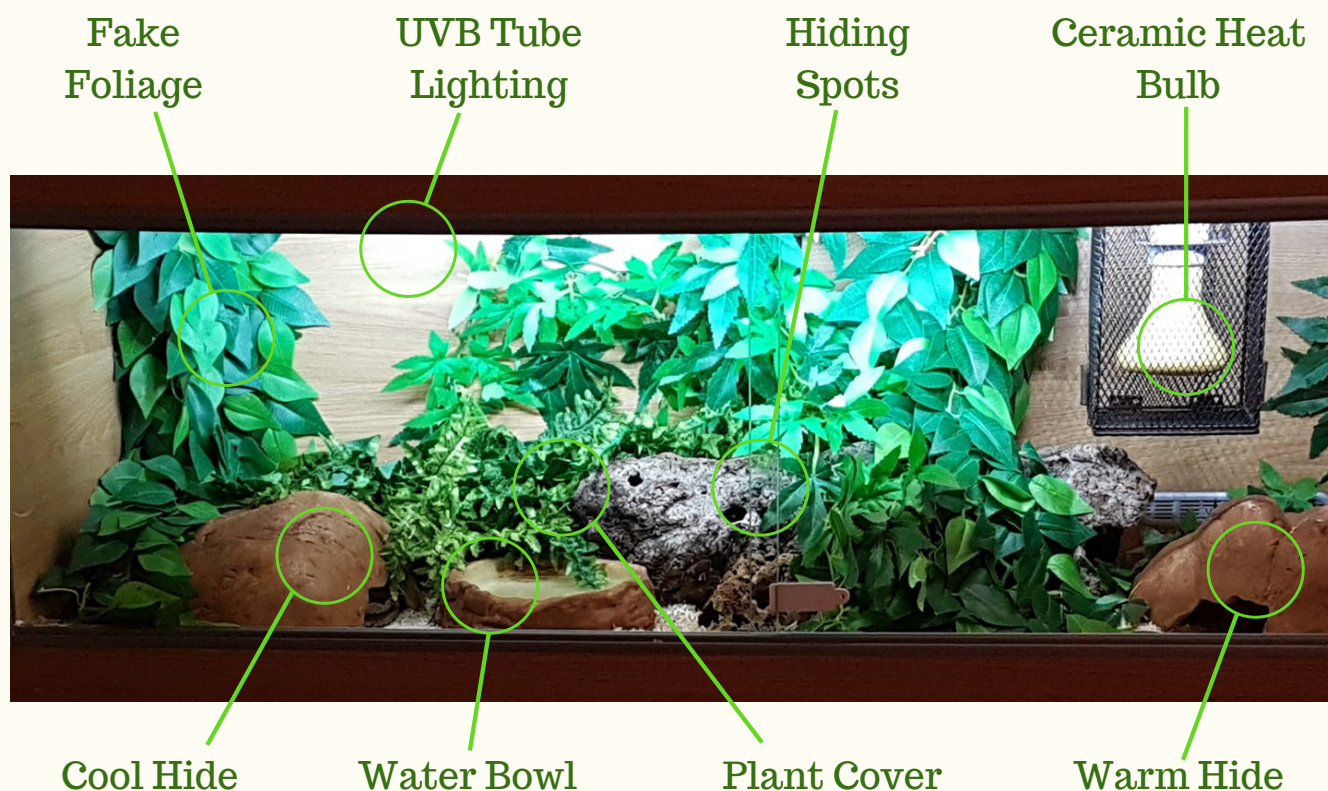
Replace water daily as they like to drink it fresh!

Fully change substrate when needed - this should be done approximately once a month

Clean decor items when soiled - fully disinfect monthly

Variations may apply when using a bio-active set-up

ENCLOSURE EXAMPLE



HOW TO SAVE MONEY

Setting up the tank is often the most expensive part of getting a new exotic. Between the tank, the electrics, the decor and maintenance tools, the cost can seem crippling. Here are some of my tips on budgeting...

Take your time

You should never rush into a purchase anyway, so buy what you need piece by piece - this will give you time to research corn snakes while you build your setup.

Don't just buy new

Using tools like Facebook, eBay and other sales sites will save a lot of money!

Use a Bio active substrate

Bioactive substrates will allow you to add clean-up-crew and plants to the setup that can make one lot of substrate last the animal's entire life

Get creative

You don't need the flashiest, top of the range decor. Try making hides out of old Tupperware, jars or cardboard boxes. So long as it functions as it needs to and doesn't cause a fire hazard it's fine.

COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS

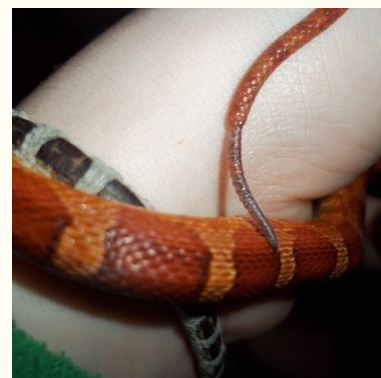
The below are a look at some common health problems you may see. It is still, ALWAYS recommended to seek veterinary assistance for anything out of the ordinary.

Stuck Shed & Retained Eyecaps



A snake should be able to shed fully in one clean piece. Sometimes they will struggle to remove the skin around the head, eyes and tail, which can cause problems further down the line if not removed.

Once you notice the stuck shed, place the snake in a shallow tub of luke-warm water (about 2cm deep) to allow the skin to soften. After 20 minutes, bring them out and gently rub them with a damp washcloth until clear.



Respiratory Infection



In cases where humidity or temperatures are incorrect for a prolonged period of time, corns can develop an infection of the upper respiratory tract. This will show as visible saliva or mucus in the mouth, open-mouth breathing, wheezing or abnormal behaviours.

Vet advice should be sought ASAP, as antibiotics will likely be necessary. This can easily be prevented with correct husbandry and picked up through regular health checks.



Mouth Rot



Caused by a build up in bacteria and lack of immune response, stomatitis is an infection of a snake's mouth. Usually noticed as discoloured mouth tissue, pus or dead tissue in the mouth and visible saliva.

Vet advice should be sought if these symptoms are noticed. In the meantime, ensure your enclosure is clean with fresh water, and the temperature and humidity is correct. Antibiotics are usually given.



Scale Rot



Scale rot is a wide term to cover any infection or damage to the scales and skin layer. This can include blisters, burns or infections. You should be able to notice any changes in colour (not shedding) and any visible sores.

This should also be checked by a vet. It is usually a result of excessive humidity, so this should be reduced to the correct level in the enclosure. Betadine baths for non-open sores will help keep the infection under control.

