



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.



THE CORN SNAKE

Pantherophis guttatus

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.

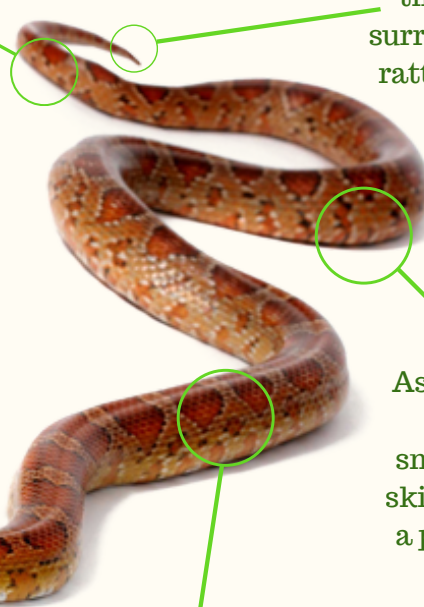
Smelling Tongues:

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



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.

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.

DIETS

Corn Snakes are obligate carnivores. 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 often.

ENCLOSURE EQUIPMENT



Vivarium Brands:
Repti-Life, Viperia, VivExotic and Pro Viv are our recommended brands for the vivarium.

UVB:
The Arcadia ShadeDweller (7% Pro T5) unit, with a 20" Lamp Guard Pro is what we recommend.



Heat Bulb:

The Arcadia halogen heat bulb is our recommended basking spot lamp. A normal white spot lamp would also be okay. Wattage depends on your enclosure size.



Heat Bulb Holder:

Any ceramic heat bulb holder will be suitable. Arcadia is a good brand, but most brands can't go wrong with this piece of kit. The protective cage is much the same, just ensure it can easily be opened to change the bulb.



Dimming Thermostat:

Arguably the most important piece of equipment, this controls the power to the heat bulb to maintain a steady temperature. Habistat or Microclimate are recommended brands.

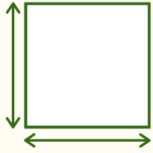


Digital Thermometer x2:

Allows you to check the temperature is correct in basking spot and cool side.

Buying items second hand can be a great way to save money, however you will not get any warranty when doing so, so use caution. For vivariums or décor, ensure the items are thoroughly disinfected before use. We don't recommend second hand items that are made of wood or other porous materials.

ENCLOSURE SET-UP



Space:

You need enough space for the snake to stretch out fully. A 4ft vivarium would be the minimum.



Lighting:

They will benefit from 5-7% UVB light during the day, with total darkness overnight.



Temperature:

They need a basking spot at 32°C, with an area below 24°C to allow for thermoregulation.



Humidity:

Corn snakes will tolerate a wide range of humidity, but thrive around 50-70%.



Substrate:

A deep layer of substrate is ideal to promote burrowing. Basic substrates like lignocel or aspen are good, but they will also benefit from sand/soil mixes that hold more humidity.



Décor:

Lots of hiding and burrowing places, as well as some climbing opportunities. A fully enclosed hide on either side of the enclosure and a water bowl big enough to soak in.

EXAMPLE



The example above is using recommended heating/lighting and uses live plants. Fake plants work just as well and require much less maintenance!

MAINTENANCE

Spot clean daily, removing any faeces/urates.

Fully change substrate when needed - this should be done approximately once every couple of months.

Clean decor items when soiled - fully disinfect monthly.

Change water regularly - fully disinfect the bowl weekly.

Replace the UVB bulb as per manufacturer guidelines.

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.

