



Husbandry Handbook

CORN SNAKES

Pantherophis guttata

A Beautiful Native Species

Corn Snakes, also known as Red Rat Snakes, are very popular snakes in the pet trade and are native to the United States. This makes them an ideal pet as their native habitat isn't that different from where most of us live. They are extremely variable and there are a wide variety of colors and patterns that have been bred in captivity. They are a genuinely small snake reaching around 5.5 feet but being very thin bodied. Their calm disposition, ease of care and hardiness are just a few reasons this U.S. native snake makes such an amazing pet.

Habitat

Corn Snakes can be found in the southeastern United States ranging from New Jersey to the Florida Keys and as far west as Illinois. Corn Snakes inhabit a wide variety of habitats across their native range. They can be found in overgrown fields, forested areas and forest openings, rocky hillsides, and palmetto flatwoods. They also can be found in abandoned and rarely used barns and buildings. These animals hibernate during the winter in colder areas of their range. In more temperate areas, they hide under logs and rocks during cold nights and emerge during the day to warm up.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling Corn Snakes can be housed in a 10 gallon Zilla® Critter Cage® product but adults require a minimum of a 40BR Zilla® Critter Cage® product. While Corn Snakes can reach a length of 66", they are mainly terrestrial and don't need a tall tank. Provide Corn Snakes with substrates that enable burrowing such as Zilla® Lizard Litter or Zilla® Bark Blend. Decorate the tank with a hide, driftwood, rocks, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities. Don't forget to include a water bowl.

Temperature and Humidity

It is important to create a thermal gradient (a warm and a cool side) in the cage/enclosure. This can be done with an appropriate sized Zilla® Heat Mat adhered to the bottom of the tank on one side. Ideal temperatures for Corn Snakes range from 75-82°F on the cool side and 80-85°F on the warm side. Provide an 88-92°F basking area on the warm side. Using a Zilla® Mini Heat & UVB Fixture with a Zilla® 50W Mini Halogen bulb and a Zilla® Tropical Mini Compact Fluorescent UVB bulb will provide the correct heat and UV for your

Corn Snake to thrive. While Corn Snakes don't need UVB to survive, UVA/UVB light has been shown to greatly improve the immune system, health, and wellness of all reptiles, both diurnal and crepuscular. Make sure to place the light over the side with the heat mat to help create that warm side of the thermal gradient. Spot clean the enclosure for urates and feces once a week. Every 3 months remove all substrate in order to clean and disinfect the tank and décor.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, Corn Snakes will prey upon small animals like rodents, small birds and bird eggs. Hatchlings and juveniles will occasionally feed on frogs or small lizards. Most hatchlings can be started off on pinkie mice every 5-7 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult Corn Snakes can be fed adult mice to small adult rats once every 5-7 days. A general rule of thumb to follow when feeding snakes is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the widest point of the snake. When possible, try to get the snake to eat frozen thawed rodents. It's safer for the snake and easier to keep a larger quantity on hand for weekly feeding.

Handling

As with many snakes, hatchling and juvenile Corn Snakes may initially be nervous and defensive. Corn Snakes may rattle their tails, musk, defecate or bite when alarmed. Handle your corn snake gently and deliberately taking care not to drop or injure the animal. Most Corn Snakes will become more tolerant and accustomed to handling as they become older.

Be sure to wash your hands after handling any animals.

