



## Why Do Corn Snakes Make Great Pets?

The absolute perfect snake for any reptile keeper; the easiest snake of any snake species to take care of with an endless array of genetic traits. Their mature size, hardiness, docile nature, and color and variability make this snake an excellent choice for families and novice reptile pet parents alike. Because of their popularity, captive bred individuals are available and affordable and adapt well to any home environment.

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## Lifespan

With proper care, corn snakes can live an average lifespan of 10-15+ years.

## Size

Hatchlings measure 8 to 12 inches long. Average sized adults reach lengths of 3 to 6 feet in length after 3-4 years of growth.

## Natural History

A subspecies of the rat snake, the corn snake can be found throughout the southeastern United States. Their native range extends from southern New Jersey to Virginia, with their main range from North Carolina to Florida, and east to Louisiana and southern Tennessee. This species inhabits open woods, dry forests, and farmlands. They seem especially fond of human establishments, likely due to rodent populations there, and are a common sight among farms and abandoned buildings.

## Housing

Hatchlings can be housed in a 10-gallon enclosure. A single adult can be housed in a mid-sized enclosure measuring a minimum of 30" in length, or enclosures that are 20-gallons long or larger. Corn snakes are not social animals, so do not house more than one corn snake per enclosure. Keep lids secured with cage clips to prevent escape.

## Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For corn snakes, these diurnal, active snakes enjoy cooler, temperate conditions.

Provide your corn snake with a basking temperature close to 90F. The ambient temperature of the enclosure should remain in the low to mid 70s. Humidity is not especially important for this species so average home humidity levels of 30-40% should suffice. The use of a white incandescent basking bulb for the day can be used to generate a basking spot and encourage your snake to be out and visible. Supplemental, 24-hour heat can be provided with the use of a commercially available reptile heating pad. Never use heat rocks as these may burn your snake! Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends of the enclosure. Measure basking temperatures with a temperature gun or digital thermometer with a probe.

This species does not require any special lighting, but they can benefit from a low output UVB. Exposure to appropriate wavelengths of UV can provide a day/night cycle for your snake and display your snake in its best colors. Providing a low output UVB is recommended but is not necessary.

## Substrates & Cage Décor

Due to its soft and absorbent nature, most corn snake enthusiasts opt for shredded or chipped aspen bedding. Cypress mulch works as well, but avoid aromatic woods like pine or cedar. Newspaper or paper towels also suffice, but corn snakes like to burrow so your snake will likely end up underneath whenever possible\*.

Corn snakes are both adventurous and curious snakes! Cork bark flats/rounds/tubes, sterilized woods, rocks, artificial plants, and most commercially available reptile décor is acceptable. Make sure that with the use of heavier décor, such as rocks, woods, and even water bowls, that the décor touches the bottom of the enclosure, this way if your snake decides to burrow beneath it, it is not accidentally crushed. Provide your snake with a hide at both the warm and cool end of the enclosure.

Offer your snake a water bowl, changing out the water daily. Misting the enclosure is not recommended as it can cause fungus and mold to grow. If your snake prepares to shed, simply add moistened moss to a hide to create a “humidity hide” for your snake to use. When your snake is done shedding, remove this damp filler to prevent the buildup of bacteria and mold in the enclosure.



## Diet & Nutrition

Corn snakes are carnivores, meaning they primarily consume rodents and do not eat plants or insects. Feed your snake appropriately sized rodents (preferably warmed, frozen/thawed mice or rats), such that prey items are no larger than the widest circumference of the snake. Young snakes can be offered food weekly, while adults can be fed bi-weekly or twice monthly.

Corn snakes should be fed in a separate enclosure, or a “feed box.” This dissociates your hand from becoming dinner anytime you enter your snake’s enclosure for handling or maintenance. Place your snake in its feed box with the thawed mouse/rat. Rodents may be offered off of tongs or simply placed into the box.

Do not handle your snake for at least a day after feeding to reduce the risk of regurgitation. Occasionally it is not uncommon for healthy corn snakes to go off of feed during the warmer, spring months or during shedding. Continue your husbandry routine as usual and keep handling to a minimum. Try offering your snake food every 10-14 days until your snake is interested in eating again. If your snake continues to be disinterested in food in addition to losing weight, then you may need to reevaluate your husbandry and/or schedule a vet appointment.

## Handling & Temperament

As a standard, do not handle your snake until it has settled into its new home. This may take several weeks. Once your snake appears comfortable and confident, observed exploring its enclosure freely, and has eaten consistently, begin handling. It is recommended that you start this process in the tank or in your lap, supporting its whole body with both hands while doing your best to avoid quick movements. With time and patience your snake will become a relaxed and enjoyable pet.