

# Corn Snake

- **Common Group:** RAT & CORN SNAKES
- **Common Name:** Corn Snake
- **Scientific Name:** *Elaphe guttata guttata*
- **Size:** 3' - 5'



## Natural History

Corn snakes are a rat snake subspecies indigenous to the American southeast. Their natural range covers most of the southern states east of Texas, and goes as far north as Kansas and parts of New England. They mostly inhabit open woods, forest clearings, and forest edges. They seem especially fond of human establishments, and are a common site on farms and in out-buildings.

Although mostly terrestrial, corn snakes will climb if given the opportunity, especially when pursuing a potential meal.

There are a handful of natural color variations of corn snakes, most of which are based on where they are found geographically. However, in the last decade or so, dedicated breeders have developed and established literally dozens of color and pattern mutations that are attractive and widely available to the public.

Corn snakes are among the easiest of all snakes to keep and breed, and as such they are by far the most common first pet snake. They rarely, if ever, bite, and have proven extremely hardy in the captive situation.

## Recommended Reading

[Cornsnakes - The Comprehensive Owner's Manual](#)

# Size and Longevity

Corn snakes reach adult size at between 3 and 4 years of age. For most specimens, this amounts to just over 4 feet in length. However, 5 and 6 foot individuals are not unheard of! Luckily, due to their slender build, even a 5 foot corn snake is a completely manageable pet.

In captivity, corn snakes can live for well over 20 years, with 10 to 15 years being average.

# Housing

Corn snakes do best when housed in all glass reptile terrariums, or other enclosures designed specifically for housing snakes. Hatchling snakes, and those up to around 2 feet, can be comfortably kept in a standard [10 gallon](#) or [15 gallon](#) glass tank. Adults should be given more space, with a cage at least 30" being a must, and the snakes are more comfortable in larger cages, such as [Penn Plax](#) or [Vision cages](#). When provided a large cage with naturalistic basking areas and hiding places, cornsnakes frequently exhibit a wide range of natural behaviors such as basking and hunting, making them fascinating display snakes.

# Heating and Lighting

With corn snakes, they can survive with no special lighting. However, to enhance the viewing of your snakes, a fluorescent light that emits low amounts of UVB, such as a [ZooMed Reptisun bulb](#), can be used. Full spectrum lighting will display your snakes to the best colors, and can also help mimic a natural day/night cycle for your snake. In addition to a full spectrum display light, a mid range [basking bulb](#) can be used to create a warm basking area for your snake. This will help encourage them to be out and visible, something that you won't get to experience if your snake only has a heat pad to sit out.

Ambient cage temperatures for corn snakes should be in the upper 70's with access to a basking area that reaches 85 to 88 degrees. Nighttime temperatures can safely drop to the mid 70's, with the basking area remaining slightly warmer. Use of a [red light](#) or a [heat pad](#) is recommended if you want a heat source that can be left on 24 hours a day.

# Substrate and Furnishings

Corn snakes, being the highly adaptable species that they are, will thrive on nearly any commercially available reptile bedding. **Chipped aspen (Sani-Chips)** is an ideal choice due to its sterile and dust-free nature. When choosing a bedding for your corn snake, avoid anything dusty or drying such as cat litter or sand. Some cornsnakes enjoy burrowing, and a **shredded aspen** bedding can be used to allow them to do so.

Provide your snake with a few hiding places within its enclosure. These may include **half-logs**, **cork flats**, **cork rounds**, or **pieces or grapewood**. Climbing structures such as **branches** and additional furnishings can be added as needed. These will add to the beauty of your terrarium and also serve as enrichment for your pet.

# Water and Humidity

Always provide your corn snakes with a clean **bowl** of water every day. The receptacle should be **large enough to permit soaking**, but huge bowls are not necessary. The water should be checked daily, and replaced if low or fouled.

Corn snakes do not require much humidity, and typically fare just fine without any special considerations on the part of the keeper. If you live in an exceptionally dry area, keep an eye out for shedding problems, indicated by incomplete, flaky, sloughing of the skin (as opposed to a single piece). If this issue should arise, consider lightly misting the enclosure twice a week with water, and slightly more often during your snakes regular shedding cycle.

# Nutrition

When it comes to food and feeding, corn snakes get pretty serious. They seemingly love to eat! However, they certainly do not require the rations that they would happily consume if given the unregulated opportunity. Corn snakes will feed readily on various sized mice for their whole lives. Babies will eat a **pinky (newborn)** mouse once a week, while adults will eat one **large adult mouse** on a similar schedule. Very large corn snakes should be given **small rats** as opposed to multiple mice for health reasons.

# Handling

Handling of corn snakes is fairly straight forward. However, as with any snake, you will want to avoid excessive handling. If your snake has any sudden changes in behavior or appetite, it could be stress-related, and over handling is a prime source of stress among captive snakes.