

Housing

Corn snakes come from a warm environment, so they struggle with the cold and humidity of the UK. To insulate against both of these factors we recommend keeping the snake in a wooden vivarium. Due to the temperature gradient required we would normally select an enclosure a minimum of 24" x 18" x 18" for young and up to 36" x 24" x 24" for adults with large vents and glass sliding front doors.

All this ventilation should ensure that heat and humidity is lost from one side of the enclosure to the other while keeping the basking spot itself at a consistent temperature.

Corn snakes can be a little shy when they are young so lots of hides are recommended. We still use the full-size enclosure if possible to make sure that the correct temperature gradient is in place but will provide more decorations to begin with.

Heating

Naturally, corn snakes require basking temperatures of around 90f or 32c. We try to provide this heat over 1/3 of the enclosure while letting the rest of the enclosure cool to 75f/80f or 23c/26c on the cool side. To achieve this we can attach a basking lamp to the ceiling of the enclosure on one side. This is controlled by a dimming thermostat to make sure that the temperature is kept correct throughout the day. Alternatively, you can use a heat mat that covers 50% of the floor space of the enclosure, we would use a heat mat regulated by a suitable thermostat.

Corn snakes will be able to reach the top of their enclosure without decorations to climb on so the basking lamp must be surrounded by a guard if deciding to use one. The basking lamp is left on for 12-12 hours per day, but be aware of night temps in your home as you do not want it to drop to low when it turns off. At night, all of the lights should go off and the enclosure should be completely dark. This should make sure that the snake has a clear day night cycle.

We prefer to use a UVB bulb on a timer 12-12 and a heat mat that stays on all the time, this prevents any guess work.

Though at this point the sun would have gone down, there would still be rocks, paths and roads that have warmed up in the day and that will radiate heat for much of the night, which again is why we prefer heat mats.

If using bulbs, we would provide this warmth throughout the night without introducing light to the enclosure by lay a heat mat under the basking area. The heat mat will warm objects around it providing a warm patch of ground for the corn snake to rest on.

Though the thermostats we sell are very reliable it is always best practice to regularly monitor your temperatures with a thermometer. A 5f variance on the basking spot is

nothing to worry about as long as your cool side is still cool. A simple dial thermometer on each side should be enough but digital probe thermometers are much more accurate.

UVB Lighting

Being mostly nocturnal, Corn snakes do not require UVB to use the calcium in their diet like other reptiles, but it is still a beneficial addition to the enclosure. The snake would naturally be exposed to UV from sunlight in the wild and as we are trying to emulate nature in our enclosures, we recommend providing some UVB on a 12-12 timer.

A 5% T8 UVB tube, 2-5% T5 uvb tube or more powerful but smaller unit such as compacts should be enough. The UV tube should be mounted to the ceiling at the back of the enclosure to provide a light gradient running parallel to the temperature gradient. A compact should be placed towards the back about 1/3 in from one side. There will be times when the snake will want less or no UVB so partial and full hiding spots should be placed all along the width of the enclosure.

Decoration

Corn snakes thrive in a low humidity environment with hard decorations to climb over and bask on. When selecting a bedding we try to ensure that the pieces are unlikely to increase the enclosures humidity. In store we normally use a coarse beech woodchip as it is clean, cheap, easy to spot clean and dust free. However aspen bedding is also perfectly acceptable substrate. If you prefer a more natural looking decoration a soil / clay mix would be perfect. If you plan to keep the snake in a bio-active enclosure a nutrient rich soil and clay mix with some sand for aeration would be perfect.

Corn snakes like the warmth coming from a basking lamp but they also really appreciate belly heat which will radiate from warm objects or a mat. Natural rocks like slate are perfect for this, so are heavy artificial ornaments. These decorations can be placed under and around the basking area and should warm up nicely. If the lamp is too low there is a chance that natural rocks could get too hot, so you are best to check the surface temperature regularly to avoid burns.

As discussed in the lighting section there will be times when the snake does not want any UVB and needs a bit of shade. To ensure that the snake can get away from the light whenever necessary we advise spreading full and partial cover throughout the enclosure. Examples of full cover decorations would be caves, flat cork pieces or any other ornament that provides a shady spot to rest. Examples of partial cover would include tall plants and trailing plants.

Diet & Water

Corn snakes are carnivorous and should be fed frozen thawed foods. Though they are opportunists we have found that mice are the best diet for a corn snake. A particularly

large corn snake may move on to the smaller rats when fully grown but an all rodent diet is best.

As hatchlings, corn snakes should be fed weekly on defrosted pinkie mice, as the snake grows the food size should be increased until the snake is taking large mice or even large weaner rats. Adult corn snakes can be fed once every two weeks as they can become overweight if fed weekly, monitor this accordingly. Remember not to offer feed items bigger than the largest point of girth on your snake.

More exotic alternative diets like gerbils, hamsters, multimammate mice or chicks could be used if the corn snake won't take anything else but they aren't as nutritious as the mice, it can be difficult to find them in the size required and they aren't always as available.

We always include water bowl large enough in the snake's enclosure for it to fully submerge in if it decides. You might notice the snake use it for bathing, this is usually to cool down or to help loosen its shedding skin. Both the water bowl should be kept on the cool side of the enclosure to prevent it from raising the humidity in the enclosure.

Cleaning

Corn snakes, as with most pets, require a clean environment to thrive. We recommend a spot clean as often as necessary and a full clean every 4 weeks or so. If you are keeping the snake in a bio-active enclosure you can spot clean and monitor the enclosure. It may still be a good item to change out the bedding a few times per year.

When cleaning the enclosure, you should remove your animal, all decorations and all the bedding. Once the enclosure is clear you can spray it all over with a reptile friendly disinfectant. These usually work very quickly and only need to be left for around 30 seconds, instructions can normally be found on the disinfectants packaging. Once the disinfectant has done its work it can be wiped away from the surfaces with a paper towel. In some cases, you might want to repeat this process a second time to ensure that the enclosure is thoroughly cleaned.

Your decorations can be cleaned in a similar method, simply spray them down with the disinfectant and rinse thoroughly with water before drying them off and putting them back into the enclosure.