

**Adult Corn Snake Care Sheet**

Minimum vivarium size

The dimensions of the vivarium should be such that the measurement of the length and width when added together are greater than the length of your snake.

Heating the vivarium

Heat may be provided by either a heat mat, spot light or ceramic bulb. All heat sources should be placed at one end of the vivarium to create a basking area and allow for a temperature gradient to develop. Heat sources should be controlled by a thermostat. The type of thermostat required will depend on the heat source used. A dimming stat is needed for a light bulb, pulse proportional or dimming stat for a ceramic bulb, and a dimming, pulse proportional or on/off mat stat for a heat mat. The thermostat probe should be placed at the hot end of the vivarium, and a separate thermometer used to calibrate the temperature of the hot end to 28°C / 82°F. It is recommended that all bulbs should be guarded to prevent the snake contacting the bulb, and a heat mat should be covered or stuck down to prevent the snake being trapped underneath the mat. Vivariums should not be placed near radiators, in direct sunlight or in drafts as these will make it hard to control the temperatures properly.

Substrate, cleaning and tank furniture

There are many substrates available to choose from. The main ones used are orchid bark, beech chips, aspen and lignocel. The substrate should evenly cover the floor of the vivarium to a rough depth of 3-4cm to allow the snake to burrow. This will need to be spot cleaned weekly, and if done properly full cleans can be done every 6-8 weeks. When cleaning the vivarium use a reptile safe disinfectant. We recommend F10 disinfectant.

The snake should have at least 2 hiding places – one at the hot end and one at the cold end of the tank, and a water bowl big enough for the snake to fit into. The water bowl should not be filled too full so it does not overflow when your snake baths. Tap water is usually fine to use but if you are concerned there are reptile safe water treatments that can be used. The water dish should be kept in the cool end to prevent excessive humidity (should be kept below around 50%, this can be measured with a hygrometer)

All cage furniture should be securely positioned so it cannot fall onto the snake and crush it.

Feeding

The snake should be fed on defrost rodents from a safe source. The width of the rodent should be 1 – 1.5 times the width of the snake's body. The snake should be offered food every 7-10 days unless starting to become overweight, when this interval can be increased to every 14-21 days as appropriate. All food should be thoroughly defrosted before feeding, and if the snake does not eat the rodent should be thrown away rather than refrozen.

Shedding

During shedding, your snake's eyes will glaze over and its body appear duller. This may last up to a week. Usually the eyes and skin clear again just before the shed happens. Once the skin has come

off, always check that there is no skin still stuck on the snake – especially over the eye caps and tail tip. If there are any concerns about retained shed consult a vet. Snakes that persistently have incomplete sheds may benefit from a moist hide being provided in the cool end of the vivarium. During the shedding process, the snake may hide away, stop feeding and become more aggressive or stressed. Minimise handling during this period.

### Health and Handling

Always allow your snake plenty of time to settle into its new home after moving the vivarium, or changing to a new vivarium. We would recommend at least a week. It is also best to avoid handling the snake for a day or two after feeding to allow them to properly digest their food.

When approaching your snake in its tank, never go towards the head and always let it know you are there before touching it. Picking the snake up from the middle of the body is best. Snakes are very sensitive to their environment, especially the smell of food and the heat of a human body.

If you are in doubt about the health of your snake, call the breeder, a reputable reptile shop or a veterinarian. Some signs of watch out for in a sick snake include:

- Prolonged lack of appetite
- The skin being wrinkled
- Mouth not closing properly
- Frequent audible respiratory noises
- Mucous around the nose and mouth
- Unusual faecal appearance
- Excessive time spent soaking in the water bowl.