

**Hatchling Corn Snake Care Sheet**

Vivarium size and location

Young snakes can feel insecure in a large tank, leading them to refuse to eat, hide away or become aggressive. A simple plastic tank roughly 15" long by 10" wide by 6" high is ideal for probably the first year of your snake's life. Note – young snakes are very good escape artists and can squeeze through the narrowest gap or lift insecure lids very easily, so make sure your tank is escape-proof! The tank should be located in a warm, quiet room, out of direct sunlight, drafts and not too near a radiator.

Heating the vivarium

Heating can be provided by a small heat mat covering roughly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the base of the tank, placed outside and underneath the tank. The heat should be controlled by a mat stat, with the thermostat probe taped to the mat. A thermometer probe should be located inside the tank under the substrate over the hot end, and used to calibrate the thermostat to produce a warm end of 28°C/82°F.

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.

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

Feeding

The snake should be fed on defrosted rodents from a safe source. Young snakes can be fed every 5 to 7 days. Hatchling corns will start on pinky mice, the smallest food size available. If the food item is no longer leaving a lump in the snake's body directly after eating, the next feed should be two of the same size prey. Once these no longer leave a bump then the size of prey should be increased. 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 eyecaps 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. Young snakes can be nervous when handled and can move very fast. Handle the snake near to the ground in case it falls out of your hands. Do not grip or restrain the snake but allow it to move freely through your fingers.

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.