Aurora ANIMAL + HOSPITAL
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Bullsnake Care

Please note these care sheets are intended for the average reptile owner to ensure that your pet is receiving basic care needed to have a healthy life and there are other aspects of advanced care that can be considered for healthy pets.

Brief Description
Bullsnakes *(Pituophis catenifer sayi)* are beautiful snakes that are large and can have feisty attitudes. They are native to the southeastern and central US, including Colorado. Captive breeding has produced a range of color patterns. Adults can get up to 6-8 feet in length.



Lifespan
With good care, the expected lifespan is 15-20 years on average.

Sexing
The most common way to determine gender of snakes is to have them probed by an experienced professional, where the hemipene pocket length is measured to determine if it male or female. Males will have much longer pockets than females.

Caging
Cages can range from very simple to very elaborate. Ideally your snake should have enough room to stretch the entire length of its body straight without touching the ends, however many snakes tend to do well in smaller habitats. This species should be in at least a 40 gallon tank (36”x18” floor space). The lid of the enclosure needs to be secure as snakes can stretch to the top and forcibly push a lid off. The cage should contain at least two hides that have one opening and allow the snake to fit snugly within it. Lack of appropriate hides will cause stress. Bullsnakes should be kept individually.

Substrate
Newspaper, paper towels or artificial turf like reptile carpet can be used for minimal mess and clean up as long as multiple hides are provided. Aspen bedding is the preferred option for most due to cleanliness and the ability for snakes to burrow through it. Mulch and soil allow burrowing but are more difficult to clean and can harbor mold or bacterial growth if not cleaned regularly. Sand and cedar or pine shavings should be avoided.

Lighting and Temperature
Reptiles are ectotherms (cold-blooded), meaning they need to absorb heat from their environment to regulate their own body heat since they cannot produce it. The basking spot should be around **80-85 degrees** at the level of the basking spot and the cooler end of the cage should be kept around **70 degrees**. A thermometer should be placed at the level of the pet in the basking area to accurately measure temperatures. Bullsnakes do not require UVB lighting, however there is emerging evidence that they may benefit from it. Providing UVB should be considered.

Humidity
Humidity in the enclosure should be no higher than 30-40% and should be monitored by a hygrometer. Excessive humidity can increase the risk of respiratory infections and scale infections.

Water
A water dish with fresh water at least big enough for your whole snake's body to fit in curled up should be available at all times. Snakes enjoy full body soakings but often defecate in their water so it needs to be cleaned often.

Food
Bullsnakes can eat a variety of prey but rodents are the most easily available food source and variety is not necessary. Young snakes should be fed once to twice weekly, whereas adults can be fed every week. Appropriately sized prey should be no bigger in circumference than the snake at its largest circumference. Feeding thawed frozen prey is preferred as offering live prey can lead to a more aggressive snake and potential injury to the snake that can be very severe. Frozen prey should be warmed to near body temperature to stimulate your snake to eat it. Most adult bullsnakes do well eating a small rat every 7-10 days.