Aurora ANIMAL + HOSPITAL
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Western Hognose Snake 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



Western Hognose snakes *(Heterdon nasicus)* are popular pet snakes due to their smaller size, comparatively easy care requirements, and adorable faces. They are native to the central US, including Colorado. Adults females can get up to 3 feet in length but adult males are significantly smaller at 1-2 feet in length. When scared, hognoses may flatten their head and strike but rarely try to bite. If particularly frightened they may roll over and play dead with their mouth open and tongue out. Hognose snakes are considered rear fang venomous but it is really only effective against amphibians like frogs and toads. Some people have a reaction to their mild venom if bitten. Captive breeding has produced a wide range of color patterns.

Lifespan

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

Sexing

Male hognose snakes have a much longer tail compared to the shorter tail of females. Adult males are significantly shorter in length and slimmer compared to an adult female.

Caging

Most hognose snakes tend to do well in 20 gallon tanks for males, 40 gallon tanks for females. Very young hognoses are sometimes less stressed being in a smaller cage to start with. 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. Hognose snakes should be kept individually.

Substrate

Hognose snakes are avid burrowers and enjoy making tunnels in their substrate. Aspen shavings work best for allowing burrowing while being easy to keep clean. Mulch and soil can allow burrowing but 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 **85-90 degrees** at the level of the basking spot for 10-12 hours every day and the cooler end of the cage should be kept around **70-75 degrees**. A thermometer should be placed at both ends of the cage to accurately measure temperatures. Hognose snakes do not require UVB lighting, however recent research suggests 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 shallow 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 often defecate in their water so it needs to be cleaned often.

Food

Hognose snakes often eat frogs/toads in the wild but rodents can be used as the sole diet. If given a frog or toad, it can be difficult to transition hognoses back to rodents. Young snakes should be fed once to twice weekly, whereas adults can be fed every week to every other 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 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. Hognoses can be notoriously finicky eaters at times, especially when young.