

Care Sheet for Hognose Snakes

Species: Western Hognose (*Heterodon Nasicus*)

Other Species or Phases this Care Sheet May Cover: Mexican hognose (*Heterodon kennerlyi*)

Sexing and Characteristics:

Upturned rostral scale, keeled scales, colour variation from deep red-brown to light grey, albinism does occur. Western hognoses can get up to about 600 grams as adults - but the average weight is probably more like 150-350 grams, depending on sex and appetite.

Males have longer tails than females - they are easy to visually sex from birth - if you have one of known sex to compare to. Adult females are generally longer and thicker than adult males.

Probably the most interesting thing about the Western Hognose is their defensive display: they will hiss and strike closed-mouthed, puffing up to make themselves look bigger. If that doesn't work, they will musk and emit a foul odour. Their third line of defence is to play dead. They are mostly active during the day time.

Substrate and Water Needs:

Aspen bedding, with a bowl of water for them to drink/soak. Hognoses can require more water than many give them credit for, and they will usually drink right of your hand if you spray water in it. Although they like a drier environment, it is important to provide a water bowl.

Lighting and UVB:

No UVB requirement but according to Hognose.com (a now defunct site) - some studies have shown they may benefit from UVB.

Temperatures and Humidity:

Daytime: 70-85°F with hot spot up to 95°F for warming

Night-time: 60-80°F

Humidity:

About 40% is ideal, always provide a water bowl.

Heating and Equipment:

Under tank heating pad or overhead incandescent light - either is fine, as long as a temperature gradient is provided.

Caging:

10-20 gallon tanks or sterilite tubs will do just fine. They like to burrow - so we provide a lot of aspen bedding - and though they tend to try to escape by burrowing - it is possible for them to escape through the top - so a secure cage lid is essential.

Diet:

Young hognose snakes can be temperamental feeders, taking some persuading to each pinkies. Some keepers have found success in 'scenting' their pinkies with toad (the native diet of these snakes in the wild). They can then be weaned onto normal pinkies. As adults, they can eat fuzzies and small mice (the larger ones can eat full-grown mice.) Most of the time they are voracious eaters - but males, especially, are prone to go off feed - sometimes for several months. Careful weighing can determine if there is something wrong - they are losing weight - or if they are simply not hungry.

If snakes have refused to eat for very long periods of time, some keepers have seen success "boost" their food by toad-scenting (that is - rubbing the parotoid glands of a toad of Bufo genus onto the mouse).

Supplements, Nutrition and Usage:

None special.

Maintenance:

Hognose snakes need spot cage cleaning every 3 or 4 days after they eat, but they are a clean species to keep.

Some Words on this Species:

Probably one of the best pet snakes out there. They have such endearing personalities and are easy to take care of if you don't mind being challenged by occasional food finickiness...

(Original care sheet supplied by <http://repticzone.com>)