



EXOTIC ANIMAL AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Hog Nosed Snake

Heterodon nasicus

Western hog nosed snakes come from North America and Mexico. They can be between 15 cm (6 inches) in length as juveniles but reach around 30 cm (1 foot) within the first 12 months of growth with an eventual size up to 75 cm (2.5 feet) in length. This is usually within 5 years. They can live for up to 20 years in captivity.

Diet

Their main diet consists of pink mice and fuzzies for hatchlings. As the snake grows, so will the frequency & amount of food given and an increase in prey size, from pinkie mice to large rats when fully grown. As a general guide one mouse per week is sufficient for a 500 gram snake. Food should be defrosted and warmed to blood temperature 37°C prior to feeding. Handling should be avoided to stop contamination with human scent. Ideally brown or black rodents should be fed in preference to white rodents.

Water

Water should always be available and a container is required which will allow the snake to submerge completely. This should be changed daily.

Accommodation requirements

- A large vivarium as possible should be provided, but at least 120 cm (4 feet) long x 60 cm (2 feet high) and 60 cm (2 feet) deep. This is required to enable a thermal gradient to be created along the length of the tank (hot to cold). Wooden or fibreglass vivaria are ideal as this provides the snake with some visual security and ventilation can be provided at snake level. Snakes do not get stressed in large environments provided they have plenty of places to hide and explore within it.
- Reptiles are ectothermic so a heat source is required. Typically a spot area is created using a spot bulb, providing a basking temperature of 32°C. This should be kept on all day. Temperatures should be measured to ensure the tank is not overheating. The cool end should be maintained at 25°C. Background heat can be provided with a heat mat (on the back wall) a tubular heater, a heat plate or a ceramic bulb. This should be set on a thermostat so that the overnight temperature does not drop below 25°C. The temperatures should be measured with a maximum/minimum thermometer. During the cold winter months careful checking is required to ensure the heat sources are keeping the tank sufficiently warm. Heat sources should be guarded to prevent thermal burns.
- Snakes do benefit from an ultraviolet light source and a low output fluorescent tube should be used. This will need to be on all day for 12 hours and within 30 cm (1 foot) of the snake. These lamps should be checked regularly for their UV output and should be changed at least every six months.
- Good ventilation is required and many commercial vivaria are lacking good ventilation. Additional ventilation holes may need to be created.

- Hides are required to provide some security. Artificial plants, cardboard boxes, plant pots, logs or commercially available hides can be used. They should be placed both at the warm and cooler ends of the tank.
- Substrates suitable for housing snakes include newspaper, Astroturf and some of the commercially available substrates. It is important that the substrates either cannot be eaten, or if they are, do not cause blockages as this can prove fatal. Wood chip based substrates should never be used for this reason.
- The vivarium should be cleaned out at least once a week to help prevent disease and a suitable disinfectant used.

Companions

- In general the happiest snake is the solitary snake.
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Salmonella

- All reptiles can potentially carry Salmonella.
- However it is rarely a cause of illness and treatment is not required.
- It can be transmitted to people and good hygiene after handling the reptile is important. Generally washing your hands in soap is sufficient. There are commercially available disinfectants that can be used as an alternative.

Parasites

- Many snakes can harbour snake mites and these are best treated by sprays or wipes from your veterinary surgeon.
- The environment will also require treatment.
- Internal parasites are common but it is important to check what parasites are present as treatments vary. It is best to get a faecal sample checked by your vet.
- Cryptosporidium is one that is of concern and special stains are required to detect if it is present.

Signs of ill health – call your vet if you see any of these

- Anorexia – although snakes can go for some time without eating it is important to get the snake looked at early so that husbandry corrections or treatment can be started as it can take time for the snake to respond.
- Mites – although there are a number of remedies available some of these can be toxic to reptiles and professional advice should be sought.
- Dysecdysis – shedding problems are commonly seen and this can be due to husbandry problems or a sign of ill health.
- Wounds – these can occur due to burns or infections and the snake may require antibiotics or other treatments.
- Noisy breathing – Pneumonia is commonly seen and if any difficulty breathing is seen then the snake should be promptly presented to your vet.

Insurance

- Unfortunately there is no NHS for reptiles and many conditions can be ongoing and require a number of diagnostic tests, leading to a financial strain which would be removed by insurance.

The Exotic Animal and Wildlife service offers

- All our vets are very experienced and have extra qualifications in reptile medicine and surgery and can offer your pet a high quality standard of veterinary care
- All reptiles are hospitalised in appropriate vivaria
- First opinion consultations
- For the more unusual and complex cases you can be referred to us
- For emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, please ring our veterinary hospital on 0131-6507650

Resources:

- www.dickvetexotics.co.uk our website providing up to date information on our services.
- www.proteus.uk.net a good source for information sheets and husbandry advice.
- www.eawt.co.uk a good source for information sheets.
- www.uvguide.co.uk the latest information on UV light sources.