Corn snakes are named for the patterning of their belly scales that resembles maize, an ancestor of modern day corn. They are known to be good climbers and escape artists. Corn snakes come in a wide variety of colors due to captive breeding. They are popular pets.

Is a corn snake the right companion animal for you?

Check “Yes” or “No” after reading the following statements:

1. I can accommodate a snake that will grow to four feet or more.
2. I am comfortable handling a snake.
3. I am comfortable feeding live food to a snake.
4. I can commit to providing proper care for this snake.
5. A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered “Yes” to these statements, a corn snake may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a corn snake and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

Average Size 4 to 6 feet long  
Life Span Up to 20 years with proper care

Diet Thawed, appropriate size frozen rodents, warmed to room temperature

Feeding Feed most adult snakes every two weeks, or as needed; feed juveniles once or twice a week
Feed in a separate tank so that your snake does not associate your hand or the cage being opened with feeding; members of the same species may be housed together, but must be separated during feeding

If feeding your snake live rodents, do not leave them unattended. Live rodents can injure the snake, sometimes fatally.

Housing Size – Appropriate size and shape habitat to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise
Substrate – Aspen shavings, mulch-type commercial material; unbleached paper towels, soil, dampened sphagnum moss, and bark; pelleted paper
Habitat – Provide a hiding area just large enough for your snake to fit inside and a branch or shelf to climb; maintain humidity of 40 to 60%
Temperature – Temperature gradient (85° F. for the warm end and 70° F. for the cool end); recommend radiant heat; use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source, use undertank heat as secondary source
Lighting – Snakes need a photoperiod light cycle; provide 8–12 hours of light daily; do not leave white light on at all times; to view snakes at night, use a black or infrared light
Water – Provide a bowl of chlorine-free water large enough for the snake to soak in

Recommended Supplies
- Habitat with secure lid
- Thermometer
- Misting bottle
- Humidity gauge
- Book about corn snakes
- Substrate
- Hide box or driftwood
- Water dish
- Undertank heat source
- Incandescent basking light or ceramic heater

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Normal Behavior and Interaction
As snake gets ready to shed, eyes will turn a milky blue over the course of a few days and body color will start to dull and develop a whitish sheen
Appetite may diminish during winter months

Habitat Maintenance
Change water daily
Thoroughly clean the tank at least once week: set snake aside in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all smell of bleach; dry the tank and furnishings; and add clean substrate

Grooming and Hygiene
Corn snakes will regularly shed their skin; ensure humidity of habitat is at appropriate level to allow snake to shed properly
To facilitate shedding, bathe snake in a large container that allows snake to immerse its entire body
Always wash your hands before and after touching your snake or habitat contents to help prevent Salmonella and other infectious diseases

Signs of a Healthy Animal
- Clear eyes (except when shedding)
- Clear nose and mouth
- Body is rounded and full
- Active and alert
- Eats regularly
- Healthy skin

Common Health Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Issue (alpha)</th>
<th>Symptoms or Causes</th>
<th>Suggested Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dermatitis</td>
<td>Blisters. Rapid shedding caused by an unclean habitat or one that is too cold or damp.</td>
<td>Clean the cage and lower humidity. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory Disease</td>
<td>Labored breathing. Mucus in mouth or nostrils. Can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.</td>
<td>Keep snake warm and dry. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomatitis</td>
<td>White, cheesy substance in the mouth; loss of teeth and appetite.</td>
<td>If untreated, can be fatal. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticks and Mites</td>
<td>Parasites on skin, can transmit disease.</td>
<td>Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red Flags
- Wrinkled or rubbed skin
- Discharge in nose or mouth
- Abnormal feces or urine
- Vomiting
- Lethargy
- Decreased appetite

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Sources
- Corn and Red Rat Snakes by Jerry Walls
- Corn Snakes and Other Rat Snakes by R.D. Bartlett and P. Bartlett
- Keeping and Breeding Snakes by Chris Mattison

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.