

Western Hognose Care Guide

Items you need:

Enclosure with secure lid and ventilation

Water Bowl

Hides

Under Container Heat Source

THERMOSTAT!

Aspen Bedding

Frozen Feeders (Ask us what size)

Safe Decorations

IR Temp Gun

Thermometer-Hygrometer (Accurite or other)

Enclosure: This species is a burrowing snake, hence the perfect digging nose that is one of their more recognizable traits. Due to their nature of burrowing, they often do not do well in large, open enclosures (aka fish tank). They thrive in smaller habitats that give them a “safe” feeling. Our hatchlings have been raised individually in a tub set-up that is approximately 3 inches wide X 12 inches deep X 2 inches tall in a rack with back heat. The tubs are partially translucent and allow light through. Smaller plastic containers can be found at grocery or dollar stores but make sure the lids have clips; the snap-on lids may not be strong enough. Sterilite has several sizes of containers with clip-lids, the 6 quart is probably the largest we would recommend for a hatchling. Small ventilation holes can be placed in the container walls by drilling holes or using a wood burner or soldering iron to burn through the plastic. Make sure tiny holes, less than 2-3 mm diameter. To give a more closed in feeling for the snake, some also opt to cover 2-3 sides on the OUTSIDE with construction paper or stick-on wrap or static cling blackout window film. Some snakes adjust quickly to larger containers and eventually, most can be placed in a more open, viewable enclosure. If they stop feeding in a new, larger enclosure, we recommend reducing the size. Do not place any sticky material inside the enclosure. We do not recommend cohabitation.

Heat/Humidity: Hognose do not require UVB light. Our hognose snakes are in a room with a window allowing daytime light through but never direct light from the sun on their containers. Hognose do require a slightly, warmer environment compared to other popular colubrid snakes. We use under tank heat which we recommend being under approximately 1/3 of the enclosure’s floor to allow a heat gradient. The hot spot (floor surface of enclosure) should range about 87-91°F and cool side 73°F to 76°F. We maintain our heat

supply with a thermostat. Thermostats give you the best means of maintaining a steady heat. There are multiple thermostat options for reptiles including Herpstat, Vivarium Electronics, Zoo Med, Inkbird and Zilla. The probe is placed on the heat source outside the container and heat source is plugged into the thermostat and thermostat plugged into house outlet. The ideal ambient temperature (air temp.) inside the enclosure should be about 78-82°F. If your home is cold, you may need to add an over the container heat bulb along with the under-tank heat to help maintain warmer air within the enclosure. We use a heat temperature gun to check temperatures inside the enclosures. These can be ordered online or purchased at Lowes or Home Depot. We do NOT recommend heat rocks inside the enclosure. We don't recommend any tape inside the enclosures or any probes or wires inside the enclosure. Hognose do not require as much humidity as some other commonly kept snakes but are also not from a dry climate. Humidity should be 45-55%, our room often runs a little more than 55% and they do quite well. Humidity can be checked with a hygrometer, like AccuRite, which can be found online and is large enough a hognose won't try to eat it. Some are very small and could look tasty to a hungry adult. If needed, more ventilation holes will lower your humidity. If poor shedding occurs, increasing humidity can help. Covering some of the ventilation holes or adding a larger water bowl will increase the humidity. Also having a humid hide can assist in shedding and this can be built with a Tupperware container with a hole cut in the lid and adding moist sphagnum moss or moist coco coir from a reptile supplier. In our hatchling bins we use a small condiment cup that sits in a cut piece of PVC as a cup holder. Any kind of easy to clean, non-spill container for water is ideal.

Bedding: Aspen bedding is the most commonly used substrate for hognose. We use both shredded and chip form depending on the availability. DO NOT use pine or cedar, these soft woods contain phenols which can cause respiratory issues. Also be aware when purchasing any mixed substrates, they can contain materials toxic to reptiles. I recommend purchasing substrate from a reptile show or reptile supply store. We typically use Zoo Med brand Aspen we can order online and available at many pet stores. Some also use coconut shell substrate like ReptiChip but this can hold more humidity than needed so do not add moisture if using this. Our hatchlings are raised and kept on PJ Murphy Coarse Sani Chips from day one, and remain on that substrate through adulthood.

Décor: Hognose do like hides and if your enclosure is larger there will need to be more hides available. We do recommend reptile safe plastic hides that can be easily cleaned. Also avoid getting hides or decorations that have holes they can get into and get stuck inside commonly seen with fish tank decor. We recycle our empty toilet paper and paper towel rolls in with our older hognose. We throw them away with each cleaning and sooner if they get moist or dirty. We do not recommend empty rolls from scented papers. A PVC pipe

could be cut and provide a hide and often they enjoy eating inside their tubes. Some like adding fake leaves as extra clutter, which are easy to clean.

Feeding: Our hognose are fed frozen-thawed mice of appropriate sizes. Your hatchling has been fed multiple times on non-scented, frozen-thawed pinkies approximately every 4-5 days. We thaw by placing pinkie in hot water, we do not recommend microwaving a pinkie. Ideally, newborn to day old pinkies are the best for hognose under 13-14 grams. As they grow the size of their prey can become larger. By about 1 year of age, we reduce feeding to once a week. We source our feeders from Layne Labs online; they have been incredibly consistent in both sizes and quality of feeder. They are very reputable with high quality rodents. I recommend making a larger order that will last several months or share with a friend that is also needing rodents because the shipping charge is usually \$35-40 to pack dry ice and have it delivered in less than 2 days. Pet stores do usually have frozen mice, but the quality may be lacking. A bad mouse could mean a sick snake.

Chemical Sensitivities: For those that have kept other snake species and use mite prevention regularly, hognose are extremely sensitive to many of these products. If your collection has mite exposure, please reach out to your veterinarian, a reputable hognose breeder or us for questions on how to help a hognose mite exposure.

Misc. Tips: We recommend allowing your new addition to settle in for a few days before handling or feeding. Offer food about 3-5 days after being in their new enclosure with proper heating. We recommend placing the freshly warmed f/t pinkie into the enclosure for a few hours or possibly overnight if needed, but we discard ours after thawed about 8 hours. Most will eat their meal within a few minutes. Some will eat directly from the tong, we will let you know which feeding style your new hatchling prefers. We recommend not handling for 2 days after eating so they have a chance to digest. As they get older and you get use to their individual habits, you will be able to handle him or her more frequently.

We hope this helps prepare you for the joy of Hognose ownership! Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions. There are many ways to accomplish the same result, but this is what works for us!

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