# Western Hognose

# (Heterodon nasicus)

# New Keeper Information Sheet

Snake ID: Hatch Date: Weight: Last fed: Last shed:

1. Feeding

Current food size:

It’s best to let your snake adjust to their new environment for 5-7 days before offering food; it may take longer for some snakes to settle, so don’t be too concerned if they refuse the first meal or two. It’s normal for hognose snakes (especially males) to refuse food quite regularly, more so during the winter months – keep track of the snake’s weight, as long as they don’t lose more than 10% of their body weight, there’s no cause for concern.

1. Enclosure

Young snakes do better in a cluttered enclosure – plenty of broken cover like fake plants and lots of small hides dotted about; there should only be a small area of ‘open’ substrate. Many enjoy climbing (but are not very good at it), so offering thick, sturdy branches or cork bark is great. The lignocel substrate in their tub can be mixed with your preferred substrate to reduce change-related stress.

1. Behaviour

You’ll probably find that your snake will either hide or roam the enclosure for the first few days – both are normal reactions to change; once they’re more comfortable, you’ll see their true character and personality emerge. If they hiss and bluff strike – this is all for show; you can confidently pick them up while they’re performing; they usually give up the act very quickly when they’re being held. If they start quickly moving towards you as soon as you open the enclosure and follow your movements, it may be a food response. A good way to let them know that it’s not feeding time is to touch them gently on the top of the head with something (a pencil, your phone, anything), and this tends to snap them out of it.

1. Heating & humidity – (Basking area 30-35C, cool end 23-26C)

A damp hide should be constantly available for snakes in ‘blue’ or under 25g in body weight.

There are many options for heating – the most important thing is a suitable thermostat.

*On/off thermostats* – switches the heat source from full power to off to maintain the temperature within a few degrees.

*Pulse proportional* – uses pulses of power to maintain the temperature at a steady level, the heat source is at full power much less than an on/off thermostat.

*Dimming thermostat* – uses a constant power level rather than pulses – this is the only type that can be used with a light-emitting heat source.

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1. Recommended cleaning schedule

Daily – water change

3-5 days post-feeding – Spot clean poops

Weekly – check damp hide & refresh moss if needed

Monthly – remove tank furniture, wipe down plastics with F10 and check for hidden poops

Quarterly – deep clean, remove all substrate and discard, wipe down all hard surfaces with F10.

1. Health issues

Health issues generally are uncommon in snakes, especially if the recommended cleaning schedule is maintained and they have the correct temperature and humidity levels, there are some that you may experience.

*Respiratory infection* – Common signs are wheezing breath sounds, laboured breathing, excess mucous leading to bubbles around the mouth and/or nose and food refusal. A vet visit is recommended as these are most commonly caused by bacteria.

*Scent gland impaction* – Primarily a female snake issue, this is also known as ‘bulb tail’ The impaction can sometimes be cleared with a gentle massage under cool water; if the blockage isn’t able to be cleared this way, there’s a chance of infection within the scent gland – a vet visit is advised.

*Mites* – Signs that you may have mites are the snake soaking in their water bowl, pale brown specs of dust floating on the water surface (early infestation), small black pinhead-sized spots in the bottom of the water bowl, around the face or cloaca of the snake (later infestation). Snake mites can arrive from a range of places and can be tricky to catch in the early stages – if you do find you’ve had a visit from these little blighters the best way to deal with them is via predatory mites – I use Taurrus mites as a preventative measure biannually, they prey on all life stages of the snake mite including the eggs and once these have been consumed, the predatory mites die off.

IMPORTANT – Never use permethrin-containing products with hognose snakes; they are extremely sensitive to this chemical.