Hognose Snake Care Sheet



Your Comprehensive Guide to Keeping Happy and Healthy Hognose Snakes

# Quick Facts

* Lifespan: 12–18 years (sometimes longer with excellent care)
* Size: 14–36 inches (females are typically larger than males)
* Activity: Primarily crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk)

# Enclosure Requirements

## *Size and Setup*

A single Western hognose snake should be housed in a secure enclosure with a minimum size of 20 gallons (e.g., a 30" x 12" x 12" terrarium). Height is less important than floor space, as these are terrestrial snakes.

## *Substrate*

Hognose snakes love to burrow. Choose a substrate that retains humidity and allows for digging, such as:

* Aspen shavings (most popular due to its safety and ease of cleaning)
* Coconut fiber
* Reptile sand
* Paper towels or reptile carpet (for quarantine or medical setups)

Avoid pine or cedar shavings, as their oils can be toxic.

## *Hides and Decor*

Provide at least two hides—one on the warm side and one on the cool side. You can also include:

* Branches for climbing and enrichment
* Artificial or live plants for cover
* Rocks and cork bark for additional hiding spots

Ensure all decor is stable and free of sharp edges.

## *Temperature and Heating*

Hognose snakes require a thermal gradient:

* Warm side: 85–90°F
* Cool side: 70–75°F

Use an under-tank heating pad regulated by a thermostat or a heat bulb and fixture to achieve these temperatures. Avoid heat rocks, as they can cause burns. Nighttime temperatures can drop to around 70°F.

# Cleaning and Maintenance

* Spot-clean waste daily.
* Replace water daily and disinfect the dish weekly.
* Deep-clean the enclosure monthly: remove the snake, replace substrate, and sanitize all surfaces and decor.

# Diet and Feeding

## *Food Items*

* Hatchlings: Pinky mice every 4–5 days
* Juveniles: fuzzy/ hopper mice every 5-7 days
* Adults: Adult mice every 7–10 days

# Handling and Temperament

Western hognose snakes are famous for their dramatic defensive displays—puffing up, flattening their necks, and even playing dead. Despite this, they are rarely aggressive toward humans. With regular, gentle handling, they become calm and tolerant. Give your snake 7-10 days without handling after you first take it home.

* Support the snake’s body fully when handling.
* Move slowly and confidently to avoid startling your snake.
* Handle for short periods (10–15 minutes) at first, gradually increasing as the snake becomes accustomed to you.
* Avoid handling during shedding or immediately after feeding.

# Health and Common Issues

A healthy hognose snake is alert, has clear eyes, and eats regularly. Watch for the following symptoms:

* Lethargy or refusal to eat not associated with shedding or breeding
* Unusual swelling, lumps, or injuries
* Wheezing, bubbles at the nostrils, or frequent yawning (potential respiratory infection)
* Discharge from eyes or mouth
* Consistently retained shed skin

**Vet Care:** If you notice your snake is lethargic, not eating for excessive periods of time, losing weight, struggling to move or breathe, consider reaching out to any of the following vets:

* Exotic Bird Hospital on Beach Blvd. (904) 256-0043
* Riverside Animal Hospital Downtown (904) 388-3494
* Birch Island Veterinary Center on Philips Hwy. (904) 717-6840
* Forever Vets Animal Hospital on Bartram Market Dr. (904) 490-8228

# Safety and Venom

Hognose snakes possess mild, rear-fanged venom used to subdue prey. Their venom poses little risk to humans, most people experience no reaction, though some may develop mild localized swelling if bitten. Always wash hands after handling your snake and use caution if you have known allergies.