

Corn Snake Care Guide

Second Chance Reptile Rescue | www.secondchancereptiles.com

Corn Snakes are often called the "easy" starter snake, but "easy" shouldn't mean "boring." These active explorers are native to the southeastern US and thrive when given space to climb, deep soil to burrow in, and higher humidity than most older care guides suggest.



Quick Stats

- **Lifespan:** 15–20+ years
- **Adult Size:** 3–5 feet (Slender bodied)
- **Personality:** Active, Curious, & Crepuscular (Active at dawn/dusk)
- **Difficulty:** Beginner (Hardy eaters, but require specific humidity)

The Rescue "Settling In" Period

- **3 Days to Decompress:** They may burrow or hide. *Do not handle them.* Double-check your lid clips!
- **3 Weeks to Learn Routine:** Start establishing a feeding routine. Attempt handling only *after* they have eaten successfully for you at least twice.
- **3 Months to Feel at Home:** They will likely be "glass surfing" to greet you when you enter the room.

Housing: The "Houdini" Warning

Corn Snakes are masters of escape. If a head can fit through a gap, the whole snake can.

- **Secure Lids:** You **MUST** use heavy-duty lid clips on top opening lids (honestly even any mesh lid). They can push open weighted lids.
- **Minimum Enclosure Size:**
 - **Hatchlings/Juveniles:** 20-gallon Long or secure tub.
 - **Adults: 4' x 2' x 2' (120 Gallon)** is the ethical standard.
 - Why? Corn snakes are active athletes. They utilize every inch of horizontal and vertical space.
- **Decor:** Clutter is key! Add branches, fake vines, and tubes. They love to climb.

Substrate (The "Humidity" Factor)

Old guides recommended Aspen shavings, but because Corn Snakes need higher humidity, Aspen often molds.

- **The Best (Natural):** A DIY mix of **40% organic topsoil + 40% ReptiSoil + 20% play sand**.
 - *Benefits:* Holds humidity well, holds burrows, and mimics their natural habitat.
- **Also Good:** Coconut Fiber (Eco Earth) or Cypress Mulch (Forest Floor).
- **✗ AVOID: Aspen Shavings** (Molds in high humidity) , **Pine/Cedar** (Toxic oils) , and **Gravel** (Impaction risk).

Heating: Halogens are Best

Corn Snakes need a gradient to thermoregulate. We recommend overhead heating to mimic the sun.

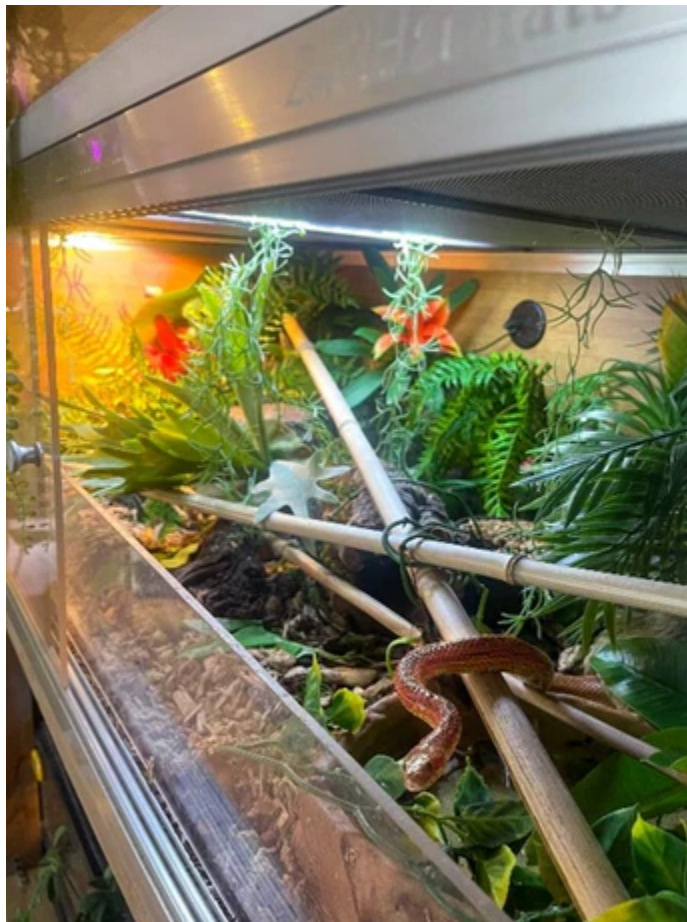
- **Temperatures:**
 - **Basking Surface:** 90°F.
 - **Cool Side (Air):** 75°F – 82°F.
 - **Nighttime:** Room temp is fine (unless the house drops below 70°F).
- **Heat Sources:**
 - **Best: Halogen Flood Light** or Incandescent Bulb. These produce Infrared-A & B (Deep muscle heating).
 - **Good:** Deep Heat Projector (DHP).

- **Okay:** Heat Mat (secondary heat only). *Must be used with a thermostat.* Mats do not heat the air effectively.
- **UVB:** Highly Recommended.
 - **The Bulb:** Arcadia ShadeDweller 6% or Reptisun 5.0.
 - **Why?** UVB improves their immune system and activity levels.

💧 **Humidity: The New Standard**

Recent climate data shows Corn Snakes live in humid areas, not dry ones.

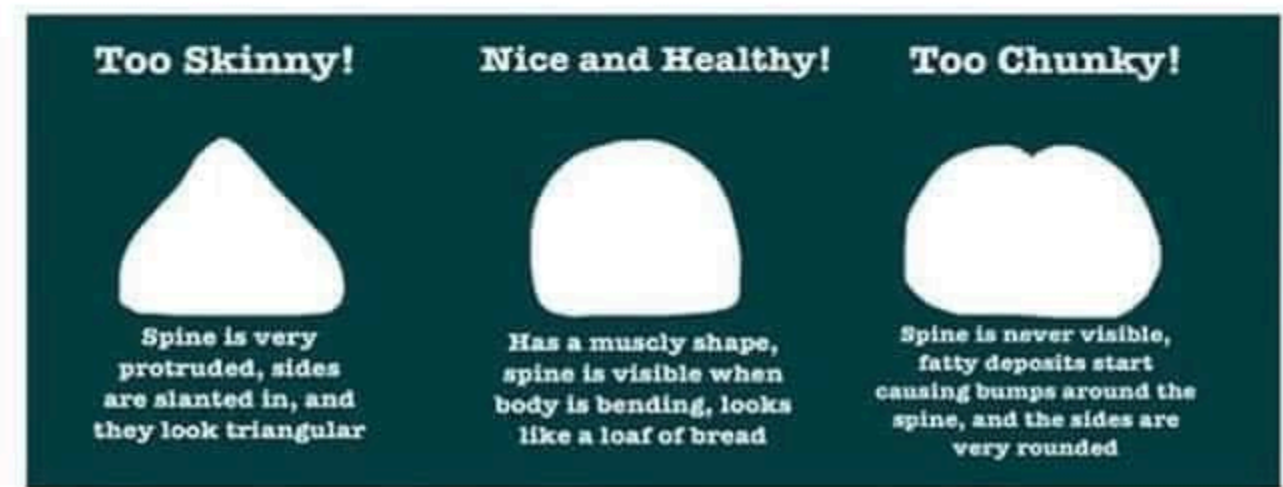
- **Target Humidity: 65% – 75%.**
 - *Rescue Note:* Old guides said 40-60%. This is often too dry and leads to stuck shed.
- **How to Maintain:** Mist the tank daily (morning is best) and use a moisture-retentive substrate like soil.
- **Water:** Large water bowl. Corn snakes love to soak. Change water daily.



Diet: Feeding Schedule

We feed **Frozen/Thawed (F/T)** prey. Unlike Ball Pythons, Corn Snakes usually stick to mice their whole lives.

- **Feeder Size:** The mouse should be **1x to 1.5x the width** of the snake's body.
- **Schedule:**
 - **Hatchlings:** Every 5–7 days.
 - **Juveniles:** Every 7–10 days.
 - **Subadults:** Every 10–12 days.
 - **Adults:** Every 14–21 days.
- **Variety:** You can occasionally offer quail eggs, chicks, or reptilinks for enrichment!



When to Call a Vet (Red Flags)

- **Regurgitation:** Throwing up a meal undigested. This is serious. Wait 2 weeks before trying to feed again (go smaller).
- **Stuck Shed:** Especially on the **tail tip**. If dry shed constricts the tail tip, it can cut off circulation and cause the tip to fall off.
- **Mites:** Tiny black or red moving dots.
- **Obesity:** If there are gaps between the scales or the snake looks "round" rather than like a loaf of bread.