

Kingsnake Care Sheet

Because we care !!!



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Your Pets Super Store



prey before eating. In the wild they will eat other snakes, lizards, amphibians, rodents and birds.

Congratulations on your new pet. Kingsnakes and milk-snakes are some of the most popular snakes in the reptile keeping hobby. They are hardy, easy to care for and handle, and come in a dazzling array of beautiful color and pattern morphs. Some subspecies utilize a natural defense of mimicking the appearance of the venomous coral snakes, with bands of red, black and yellow. The most popular milk-snakes include the pueblan, the sinaloan, and the honduran. Keep only one kingsnake per cage as they will eat each other. These snakes reach sizes of three to four feet, and live 15-20 years. They are constrictors, suffocating their

HOUSING

Kingsnakes and milksnakes come in a variety of sizes, so a cage can be chosen according to the adult size of the snake. Most adult kingsnakes can be housed in a standard twenty-gallon long or thirty-gallon breeder aquarium. The idea is to have an enclosure large enough to provide a thermal gradient. For a substrate, sterilized reptile bark is attractive and easy to clean. Aspen bedding can also be used, it has the benefits of bark and allows snakes to burrow. Carefresh is another bedding that allows for burrowing. Cage carpet can also be used. It is important to provide snakes with hiding areas so that they feel secure in their captive environment. At least two hiding spots are needed, one on the warm side and one on the cool side.

HEAT AND LIGHTING

Reptile keepers must provide a thermal gradient for their animals so that they may heat up or cool down, as they would do in the wild. There are many different ways to provide a thermal gradient, but all require that you purchase a good digital thermometer to make sure you are providing the correct temperature range. Almost all kingsnakes and milksnakes do well with a maintenance temperature gradient of 84-88 degrees fahrenheit on the warm end and 70-75 degrees at the cool end. At night, the temperature can safely drop to 65 degrees as long as the snake can warm up during the day. It is important to place the under tank heater on one end of the cage, so that the other end remains cooler. Undertank heaters work well because they can be left on at night without disturbing the animal. The heat bulb must be located on warm end of the enclosure so the snake can warm up to digest it's food properly. Light should be provided 10-12 hours a day.

HEAT AND LIGHTING - continued

Another aspect of providing the correct environmental conditions is humidity. Most kingsnakes and milksnakes do well with the relative humidity ranging from 40-60 percent. When a snake is close to shedding its skin, its eyes will become milky and its scales will become duller. Most incomplete sheds are caused by low humidity. One way to raise the humidity is to mist the cage lightly for a few days until the snake sheds, or add a layer of moist moss to one of the hides and keep moist at all times. A water bowl is also needed in the cage.

DIET

Feed baby snakes about once every five to seven days. This is an adequate feeding schedule until the snake is a year old. Snakes grow fastest during the first year of their lives. Adult snakes can be fed less frequently, about once every ten days, or once every other week. You should offer your kingsnake rodents that are about the size of the snake at the snake's widest section, or slightly larger than that. Feed your kingsnake frozen / thawed rodents — exclusively, if possible. They are easy to acquire, easy to store, easy to prepare, and safer than the freshly killed alternative. It's important to provide clean drinking water to your snake at all times. You might not see your snake drinking very often, as they tend to be secretive animals. But you should make sure it has the option to drink anytime it wants.

CLEANING

Check for poop and wash out the water bowl daily. Once a month, move your snake to a safe place. Then remove all the substrate and scrub out the cage with a weak chlorine solution or reptile safe cleaner. Rinse and dry thoroughly. Add fresh substrate and then your snake.

HEALTH

Always wash your hand before and after handling any reptile. A healthy snake will have a firm rounded body with shiny smooth skin. Eyes and vent should be clean and clear and inside of mouth uniformly pink. Eyes will appear cloudy shortly before shedding. Periodically check for mites. Signs of illness may include discharge from the eyes, gasping for breath, red or cheesy looking matter inside of the mouth. Scabs, sores or swelling around the vent also indicate illness. Call your veterinarian if you notice any of these symptoms. Regurgitation is relatively common in these snakes, and can result from handling them too soon after a meal. Other causes can be food that is too large, an enclosure that is too cool, or illness. If regurgitation is recurring after correcting the environmental and feeding causes, check with a veterinarian.

FERTILITY

Consult one of our pet specialists.

CHECK LIST

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 gallon or larger aquarium
with a tight fitting screen top | <input type="checkbox"/> large water bowl |
| <input type="checkbox"/> substrate; coir fiber, aspen,
Carefresh or cage carpet | <input type="checkbox"/> undertank heater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two hides, one with moss
for shedding | <input type="checkbox"/> heat light |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> digital thermometer |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> humidity gauge |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> reptile safe cage cleaner |