

Milk Snake Species Profile: Housing, Diet, and Life Span

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Lampropeltis (pyomelana, triangulum, and zonata)



Comparable to king snakes, most milk snakes are tricolored (red, black, and yellow); but due to captive breeding they are now available in many color morphs. These snakes tend to be a more nervous type and, if startled, can possibly bite, or may urinate or defecate. With a lot of patient, gentle handling these tendencies will decrease. Milk snakes tend to be escape artists, so choose a secure cage.

A Milk Snake's life span is approximately 10 to 12 years. To help them live long lives in captivity, it is very important to provide these animals with a day/night photo period; 12 hours on and 12 hours off usually works best. The proper temperature for these snakes ranges from 84° to 92°F. These conditions can be best met by using a combination of fluorescent lights, incandescent lights, heat emitters, and under-the-tank heaters. Many of these come in a variety of wattages to accommodate different size cages.

Quick Stats: Milk Snake

Family: Colubridae

Origin: From Canada south to Venezuela, but mostly found in the United States

Size: 2 to 4 feet as adults

Diet: In the wild; small rodents, birds, lizards, and other snakes. In captivity; vitamin-dusted mice

Water: A bowl of fresh clean water should be available at all times, preferably large enough to allow the snake to soak; provide fresh water daily

Housing: Commercial snake enclosure or a 20 gallon, long aquarium with a locking screen top for a medium sized snake; a larger snake will need up to a 60 gallon aquarium.

Substrate: Sterile store bought brands of aspen shavings, mulch, or bark; in a pinch, newspaper

Decoration: Hiding places, rocks, and sparse artificial plants

Lighting: No special lighting required other than day/night photoperiod

Temperatures: 84° to 92°F

Humidity: 40-60%

Breeding Season: Late spring - early summer, after hibernation

Care level: Best kept alone; aggressive when breeding

Cautions: Might bite or relieve itself if startled