

# 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