

WESTERN HOGNOSE CARE GUIDE

Heterodon nasicus

Introduction Western Hognose Snakes are a mildly venomous, small colubrid species with an upturned snout which is used to digging. A species which is particularly active during the day (diurnal) and very energetic which makes them an extremely interesting and amusing captive to observe.

Some of the many common names are plains hognose, blowing adder, blowing viper, common hognose.

Experience Level Beginner to Intermediate

Temperament Energetic & inquisitive but easily tamed. Hognoses are full of character, extremely active and great fun!

Venom Hognose snakes are mildly venomous and possess enlarged rear fangs which may or may not be slightly grooved and it is therefore, as far as we are aware, unclear as to whether or not these fangs are capable of delivering their venom. It is more likely that any envenoming is done by delivering the contents of its Duvernoy's gland through a simple chewing action as is the case in other species who do not possess enlarged fangs. The enlarged fangs of the hognose were once believed to be used to deflate toads but as the natural diet of westerns is documented as only around 50% amphibian and other hognose species eat only small quantities of amphibians, this seems unlikely.

In general, they are all about bluff and normally have no desire to bite. Being mostly ambush hunters, bites are usually an accidental or inaccurate feeding response therefore use of tongs for feeding is recommended.

All of this being said, they are not considered particularly dangerous to humans with reactions to bites ranging from no reaction or only a slight tingling sensation to severe swelling and numbness.

Captive Variants Wild Type, Albino, Anaconda & Superconda, Anery, Caramel, Hypo, Lavender, Mocha, Pink Pastel, Spider, T+ Albino, Toffee Belly

Other Known Variants Leucistic

Expected Adult Length Males 45 to 60cm, Females 60 to 100cm

Recommended Housing Vivarium or plastic tubs

We have used both vivariums and tubs for housing Western Hognose with equal success.

Other requirements:

-Small water bowl

-A minimum of 2 hides (1 in the cool end and 1 in the warm end)

-Deep substrate for burrowing

Hognose snakes do not do well in humid environments therefore good ventilation is essential.

Temperature Range 24°C (75°F) to 32°C (90°F).

hognoses do very well at these temperatures however many keepers suggests a hotter warm end and we would therefore suggest increasing the warm end to 34°C (93°F) should you experience feeding difficulties.

Recommended Heating When using a deep substrate, vivs are a great deal easier to maintain the correct temperature with overhead heating than using a heat mat under the tub.

Viv - Guarded heat bulb or heat mat

Tub - Heat mat, mount ours on the wall to avoid the problem of the deep substrate blocking the heat.

Whichever method is used, the temperature should be controlled by a suitable thermostat and monitored using a digital thermometer.

Origin United States of America

Natural Environment Western hognose snakes inhabit a wide range of mainly semi-arid environments including grasslands, rocky areas, prairies and sandy regions.

Recommended Substrate Hognoses enjoy digging and we therefore recommend and use a deep (2 to 3") covering of aspen. If using a deep substrate care should be taken to ensure that the correct temperature is maintained particularly when heating with a heat mat or cable as the substrate will act as an insulator. The temperature underneath the substrate could quite easily be 5°C (9°F) higher than on the top of the substrate.

Natural Diet Amphibians, Lizards and their eggs, Rodents

Other Observations Western Hognoses can be very intimidating when approached, as they may hiss, rear up, strike in your general direction with a closed mouth or even flatten out like a cobra but it is all a bluff and if you ignore it, they will more often than not cease this activity. In the wild they also feign death by lying still upside down or even bleeding from their mouth but this activity is not normally observed in captivity.

Hognoses are well known for going off their food in winter and early spring and it is easy to assume that it is due to the drop in temperature, however, if you are maintaining the temperature in the warm and cool end then this cannot be the case. In our experience they go off their food due to the drop in photoperiod, therefore if you are not intending on brumating (cooling) your hognose, we recommend increasing the amount of daylight hours to around 14-16 hours for most of the year.