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SNAKES

Mexican Kingsnake

Lampropeltis mexicana

Lampropeltis mexicana is a slender kingsnake from the highlands of central Mexico with red, black-edged crossbands on a grey or brown ground colour and a variegated red pattern on the head. It reaches 60-90 cm, is nocturnal and reserved and needs a dry to slightly humid terrarium with many hides and a cool winter rest. The pattern resembles that of a coral snake, but the snake is completely harmless.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Ophibolus triangulus mexicanus; Coronella mexicana; Oreophis boulengeri*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**60-90 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-25 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Montane forest and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**90 × 45 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**20-26 °C**
Basking spot	**28-30 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**10-14 °C** 8-12 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**3-5 eggs**
Incubation	**60-70 days** at 25-27 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
Little is known about the care of *Lampropeltis mexicana* specifically. Care is based on the climate of the highlands and on the closely related mountain kingsnakes, especially *Lampropeltis alterna*.

TEMPERATURE
The terrarium must have a distinct temperature gradient, so the animal can choose a spot. By day the air in the terrarium is 20-26 °C, with 20-22 °C at the cool end and 28-30 °C on the surface under the heat source.

HUMIDITY AND WATER
Humidity is 40-60%, and the terrarium is well ventilated. The substrate is dry to slightly moist, and higher values for longer periods cause skin problems and respiratory infections.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species is nocturnal and secretive and in the wild gets only a little direct sunlight. UVB is not necessary but is recommended for welfare.

FEEDING
In the wild diurnal lizards are the main food, but in captivity the animals usually eat thawed, frozen mice, which are the safest diet. Do not offer live rodents, because they can bite and injure the snake.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
L. mexicana is reserved and nervous at first, but usually gets used to handling. Give a new animal about two weeks in peace, and begin handling only once it is eating regularly.

NATIVE RANGE
Mexico.