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SNAKES

Eastern Pinesnake

Pituophis melanoleucus

Pituophis melanoleucus is a stout, diurnal, burrowing snake from the south-eastern USA, where it lives in sandy pine woods and open scrub. It grows to 120-210 cm, is pale with dark blotches and has a pointed snout built for digging. When threatened it hisses loudly and vibrates its tail like a rattlesnake. It is hardy and feeds willingly, but it is large and strong and a skilled escape artist.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Coluber melanoleucus; Pityophis melanoleucus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**120-210 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Savanna and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-29 °C**
Basking spot	**30-34 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-24 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Not required**
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**36-48 months**
Clutch size	**3-24 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**64-79 days** at 26-28 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
Relatively little care knowledge exists on *Pituophis melanoleucus* itself, because animals in the trade are often sold under other names.

TEMPERATURE
By day the terrarium should be 24-29 °C with a warm zone of 30-34 °C under the heat source and a cool end down towards 24 °C, so that the snake can choose for itself, especially after a meal.

HUMIDITY AND WATER
Humidity should be 30-50 %. *Pituophis melanoleucus* comes from dry, sandy habitats, and the substrate must be kept dry. Provide a heavy water bowl with fresh water that cannot tip over, and change the water regularly.

LIGHTING AND UVB
Pituophis melanoleucus is diurnal, but rarely basks and does not need UVB light to stay healthy. An ordinary day-night rhythm of about 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness controlled by a timer is enough.

FEEDING
Pituophis melanoleucus lives on rodents, and in captivity it is given frozen and thawed mice and rats. Chicks and quail can give variety. Do not give live rodents, which can bite the snake.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
Pituophis melanoleucus has a dramatic defence. When threatened it hisses very loudly, amplified by a cartilage flap in front of the windpipe, vibrates its tail, flattens the head and strikes in a sweeping movement.

NATIVE RANGE
United States.