herpy

SNAKES

Aesculapian snake

Zamenis longissimus

Zamenis longissimus is a slender, non-venomous, diurnal ratsnake that reaches 110-160 cm and is one of the largest snakes in Europe. It is an excellent climber with a smooth, bronze-sheened back, lives in warm deciduous woodland and around old stone walls, and needs a cool winter rest to thrive. It is calm and trainable, but the winter rest makes it a snake for the somewhat experienced keeper.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Elaphe longissima*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**110-160 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**350-900 g**
Lifespan	**15-25 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rocky terrain and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 75 × 80 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-29 °C**
Basking spot	**30-33 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**60-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Optional**
Winter rest	**3-8 °C** 13-22 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**5-11 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**42-70 days** at 27-28 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult *Zamenis longissimus* needs an enclosure of at least 120 × 75 × 80 cm (length × width × height). The species climbs a great deal, so height is just as important as floor area, and bigger is always better.

TEMPERATURE

There must be a clear temperature gradient. During the day in the active season the background temperature should be 24-29 °C, and under the heat source there should be a basking spot of 30-33 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity should be 60-70 %, with one corner of the substrate kept slightly damp, because the species comes from moderately moist woodland regions and not from a tropical climate.

LIGHTING AND UVB

Zamenis longissimus is diurnal and needs a clear day and night. The light is on for 12-14 hours a day in the active season, controlled by a timer, and is shortened before the winter rest. A night light is unnecessary.

FEEDING

Zamenis longissimus eats small mammals. In the wild 90 % of the prey is mammals, especially wood mice, mice and shrews, and the rest is mainly nestling birds and birds' eggs.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Zamenis longissimus is calm and curious and usually becomes tame with regular, gentle handling. It moves slowly and purposefully through the hands.

NATIVE RANGE

Andorra, Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Czechia, Germany, Spain, France, Georgia, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Turkey and Ukraine.