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SNAKES

Western Hognose Snake

Heterodon nasicus

Heterodon nasicus is a small, stocky colubrid from the North American prairies with an upturned snout that it uses to dig in loose soil. When threatened, it puffs itself up, hisses and finally plays dead. It is active by day, calm and easy to keep, which makes it a good first choice among snakes. It is rear-fanged with a mild venom; bites are rare but can cause marked swelling.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Heterodon gloydi* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**35-90 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**80-400 g**
Lifespan	**15-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and savanna**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**90 × 45 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**23-27 °C**
Basking spot	**31-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-22 °C**
Humidity	**30-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**5-15 °C** 4-12 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24-36 months**
Clutch size	**2-23 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**51-64 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	An adult needs an enclosure of at least 90 × 45 × 40 cm (length × width × height).
TEMPERATURE	Provide a clear gradient. The warm end should have a basking spot of 31-35 °C, measured on the surface, while the air temperature is otherwise 23-27 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The humidity should be around 30-60 %. The species comes from dry regions and does not need humid air, but air that is too dry and a dusty substrate lead to grime in the nostrils and stuck sloughs.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is active by day and benefits from bright daylight. The light can be on for 12 hours a day all year round, or follow the seasons with 14-16 hours in spring and summer and 8-10 hours in autumn and winter.
FEEDING	In the wild, *H. nasicus* eats mainly toads and other amphibians, but also lizards, rodents, reptile eggs, birds' eggs and occasionally other snakes. In captivity, the staple food is frozen, thawed mice.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Heterodon nasicus* is calm and easy to handle. The threats are bluff, and the snake almost never bites in defence. Let it settle after a display, and do not disturb it while it is playing dead.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Canada.