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SNAKES

Corn snake

Pantherophis guttatus

A slender, calm and hardy snake from the south-eastern USA with red, black-edged blotches on an orange ground colour. It reaches 90-150 cm, tolerates handling and forgives most beginners' mistakes, which makes it one of the most obvious choices for anyone wanting a first snake.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Elaphe guttata* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-150 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-25 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rocky terrain and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-27 °C**
Basking spot	**30-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**50-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**16-24 months**
Clutch size	**10-30 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**55-65 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 *Pantherophis guttatus* needs an enclosure of at least 120 × 60 × 60 cm (length × width × height). The rule of thumb is that the length should at least equal the snake's own length, and the width half of that.

TEMPERATURE

There must be a clear temperature gradient so the snake can choose for itself. The basking spot under the heat source should be 30-32 °C, and the cool end 24-27 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity should be around 50-70 %. Recommendations range from 40-60 % to 65-75 %, and the species copes well across the whole range, as long as there is a humid hide for shedding.

LIGHTING AND UVB

Pantherophis guttatus is most active at dusk, but needs a clear day and night. The light is on for 12 hours a day, preferably 13 hours in summer and 11 hours in winter, controlled by a timer.

FEEDING

Pantherophis guttatus eats whole, frozen and thawed rodents. Mice are the most commonly used food, and larger animals get small rats.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Pantherophis guttatus tolerates regular handling better than most reptiles and usually becomes calm and inquisitive. Let a new animal settle in for two weeks and eat regularly before it is handled.

NATIVE RANGE

United States.