

Western Hognose (Heterodon nasicus)

General Information

This fantastic little snake with the upturned snout can be found in and around places such as dry, sandy prairie areas, scrubland and river floodplains and in locations including Texas and Mexico. Normally around 18" – 24" in length, they can grow sometimes a little bigger. The Western Hognose has a 'striking' resemblance to a prairie rattlesnake.

Brief overview of needs

Perhaps not as well known as the more popular Corn and Kingsnakes, these are snakes with a lot going for them in terms of the hobbyist. Except in the case of an exceptionally large Western Hognose, a relatively small enclosure will be large enough for the species. Temperatures should be around 75-85 F, but cooler at night. Make provision for a temperature gradient within the enclosure. As is always the case, there is a need for a robust water bowl in the enclosure, one that cannot be easily tipped over. A hide box is also required although another thing to be considered with the Western Hognose is that they are burrowing animals. It may be that you might want to provide a substrate that would allow them to perform this action in captivity, such as a layer of coarse sand. Be careful though, as it can cause serious problems if sand was ingested during feeding. It would be better to feed the



animal in a different enclosure if you decide to use sand, just to be safe. Something that can be scary is their reaction when they feel threatened. They may flatten their head and neck, hiss and strike, but they rarely bite. They may even, if taken to extremes, roll over and play dead. Even captive

bred animals may display some of this behaviour but will diminish with time. In the wild the Western Hognose diet will include lizards, toads and small rodents however,

captive bred snakes will readily feed on appropriate sized mice. They are usually most active during morning and late afternoon.

Finally

Picking up and handling newly purchased snakes is of great importance. By all means allow it a couple of days to settle in to its new enclosure, but don't leave it any longer than that. Most snakes will probably move away from you and may even threaten you and this is especially true of this particular species. Just be persistent, it

is normally just a bluff and they will rarely bite, though they may strike on occasions. It is worth bearing in mind however, that they are back-fanged snakes and they do carry a mild toxin, dangerous to its usual prey, but



largely harmless to humans. Nonetheless, should an individual suffer from allergic reactions, it may be worth leaving these snakes alone just to be safe. Regular handling is needed for the animal to get used to being picked up and moved. Be gentle and avoid sudden movements that could frighten the animal. Snakes may take exception to being handled within a couple of days of feeding and regurgitation is a distinct possibility under these circumstances.