

King Snake

(*Lampropeltus sp*)

Country of Origin	United States of America
Average Size	5 – 6 Foot
Temperament	Can be aggressive if afraid, else docile
Food Source	Mice
Experience Level	Beginner



There are many species of king snake but all require approximately the same basic care, and originate from the USA and Mexico. Milksnakes are the same. There are many colour forms. The king snake tames down with handling. The bite of this snake is not harmful and hatchlings will not even come close to breaking the skin.

A minimum size tank would be about 36 x 15 x 15". King snakes will climb so some height is required, but most important is length. As with most snakes, king snakes are escape artists, a heavy, secure lid, or sliding doors locked with a cage lock is essential. It is vitally important never to secure two king snakes in the same vivarium, regardless of sex or species. King snakes are cannibalistic by nature and it is a high risk that one snake will be eaten overnight, or both will die in the attempt. Breeding should be undertaken with due care, and experience.

The substrate of the tank should be something such as bark chips, although newspaper can be used, but is not as attractive or enjoyable for the snake. It is very important to have a hide box that the king snake can take refuge beneath, and a large water bowl, large enough for the snake to bathe in when shedding. King snakes love to climb and branches and ropes are ideal.

King snakes do not require a specific level of humidity. A large water bowl filled every day should provide adequate humidity for a king snake. The temperature gradient should be 75-85 degrees with a slightly higher basking spot. Special lighting such as UVB is not required for a king snake as they will gain no benefit from it, being nocturnal.

King snakes will take defrost mice readily. They will strike prey fairly aggressive so be careful not to handle your king snake smelling of mouse. Hatchlings will take pinkies, and the mouse size increases till adults are on large adult mice. Twice a week feeding is advised as hatchlings, but it lowers to once a week as adults.

King snakes have a reputation for being aggressive that is unfounded. These snakes are fairly timid, and are easily scared. When scared, they rattle their tail, coil up tightly, and can even open their mouths and strike. They are not trying to kill, they are trying to protect themselves. Be fairly firm but not aggressive in return, and your snake will soon learn that you are not a predator. If you are acquiring an adult specimen that is aggressive, wearing gloves until he/she calms down is advised.