

## Western Hognose

*(Heterodon nasicus nasicus)*

Country of Origin	North America
Average Size	18-24"
Temperament	Active, Interesting
Food Source	Rodents
Experience Level	Beginner



The western hognose is a small member of the colubrid family, that originates from North America. It is a rear fanged snake that carries a very mild form of venom. This is generally considered harmless to humans. They are a chunky snake, but small in stature, growing on average from 18 to 24 inches, with a maximum recorded size of just under 3 feet. The western hognose has an upturned nose, used for digging and burrowing, and this snake is famous for playing dead if threatened. Do not be tricked into thinking a hatchling is dead – they can hold their breath, turn themselves upside down, and remain still for long periods at a time if they feel necessary.. as soon as they feel safe, they will shoot off! They also have threatening behaviour such as hissing and coiling up, but once tamed this snake can be placid and handleable.

Unlike most snakes, this snake is diurnal – meaning that it is active and hunts during the day. In the wild they will eat a wide variety of rodents, small birds, frogs, lizards, and even smaller snakes. In captivity they can be started on very small pinkie mice and once started feed readily throughout their lives on defrost rodents.

A note should be made on the fangs and venom of this snake – although they are rear fanged and have a very mild venom, scientific studies have shown the venom is specifically designed to target amphibians. Should you be bitten by a western hognose there should be little adverse reaction – a bitten finger may experience a tingling sensation that passes.

The minimum cage size for adults would be a 24 x 15 x 15 inch vivarium. Sliding doors are recommended, with a lock, as these snakes have a nose that can pry off lids and could pry open a door that was left slightly open. The hot side of the tank should be 80 – 86F, whilst the cool end of the tank should be in the mid to high 70s. These snakes are burrowers and an ideal substrate would therefore be aspen, as deep as possible. A hiding place should be offered, and a water bowl large enough for the snake to submerge himself in should be provided at all times.

In conclusion, the western hognose is a small snake with a lot of personality that takes up very little space, and is relatively simple to care for.

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