



## Beauty Ratsnakes *Orthriophis taeniurus ssp.*

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- Ranges across southern and southeastern Asia, including China, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Malaysia.
- A fairly slender bodied, semi arboreal snake, color and pattern can vary depending on the species. Ground color can be tan, yellowish, to olive brown, slate gray, or bluish with large, darker irregular spots and blotches. There are usually darker ocular stripes on its elongated head, and the tail usually grading from blotches into striping.
- Commonly kept species include the **Taiwanese Beauty snake** (*O. taeniurus friesei*), **Vietnamese Blue Beauty snake** (*O. taenirus callicyanous*) and **Cave Dwelling rat snake** (*O. taeniurus ridleyi*).
- If provided the proper care, beauty rat snakes can attain longevity of 15-20 years or more.

### Size

Ranges from 8-12 inches as hatchlings, and 5-9 feet (54-108 inches) for most adults.

### Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling beauty rat snakes can be housed in a 15-20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult rat snakes should be housed in a minimum of a 40-60 gallon long terrarium or enclosure or larger. Rat snakes will thrive on a substrate of newspaper, cage liner material, aspen or Sani Chip shavings, or cypress mulch. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide a water bowl or dish and a hide box at all times in the enclosure. Artificial foliage, driftwood, and other cage furnishings can provide additional security. These species are also fairly arboreal, and benefit from ample perches and climbing opportunities such as shelves, branches, or mounted dowels.

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Overhead, incandescent lighting can also be used, but is not required for rat snakes (which are primarily nocturnal). Ideal temperatures for corn snakes range from 75-80 degrees F on the cool side and 84-88 degrees F on the warm side.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

### Feeding/Diet

In the wild, beauty rat snakes will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, and small birds and bird eggs. Hatchlings and juveniles will occasionally feed on frogs or small lizards.

Most hatchlings can be started off on fuzzy mice every 3-5 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult beauty rat snakes can be fed adult mice to small or medium rats once every 5-7 days. A general rule of thumb to follow when feeding snakes is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the widest point of the snake.

### Handling

As with many snakes, hatchling and juvenile beauty rat snakes of most species may initially be nervous and defensive. They may rattle their tails, musk or defecate, or bite when alarmed. Handle them gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. There is some variability in temperaments among the beauty rat snakes. Some will become very docile and tolerant of regular handling, while others may remain remaining somewhat aggressive or irascible snakes.

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***