Western Hognose Snake *Heterodon nasicus*

- Western hognose snakes are stocky bodied colubrid snakes ranging from southern Canada, central United States, and northern Mexico.
- Tan, grayish, to light brown background color with numerous darker dorsal blotches and darker alternating spots along the sides.
- Named for the sharply upturned rostral (nose tip) scale used to burrow.
- Western hognose snakes are the most widely kept and readily available species of hognose.
- If provided the proper care, western hognose snakes can attain longevity of 15-20 years or more.

Size

Ranges from 5-8 inches as hatchlings, and 18-24" for most adults. Males tend to remain smaller than females.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling western hogmose can be housed in a 10-15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adults should be housed in a minimum of a 20-30 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Western Hognose will thrive on a substrate that allows for burrowing such as 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.

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 most snakes. Ideal temperatures for western hognose 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, western hognose snakes will feed primarily on amphibians such as frogs, toads, and salamanders.

In captivity, most hatchlings can be started off on and take readily to pinkie mice every 3-5 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult western hognose can be fed adult mice 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 hognose snakes may initially be nervous and defensive. They may flatten their necks, hiss, and mock strike, or occasionally death feign. Handle your western hognose gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Most western hognose snakes will become more tolerant and accustomed to handling as they become older and tend to grow out of this behavior.

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