



Common Tree Snake (*Dendrelaphis punctulatus*) Care

Common tree snakes go by many names including green tree snakes, yellow-bellied black snakes, and grass snakes. One of the reasons they have so many names is because their colors heavily vary and may include olive, green, brown, blue, and black. Nevertheless, they all have slender bodies with a long thin tail and generally grow to about 1.2 meters in length. Common tree snakes are native to Australia and Papua New Guinea and have a range of natural habitats including rainforests, dry woodlands, riverbanks, and creeks. Being an arboreal species, the common tree snake prefers climbing trees and branches as opposed to digging in the ground and generally is more active during daylight hours. They are considered non-venomous to humans; however, they do secrete a mild venom from fangs located at the back of their mouths which aid in digesting prey. More frequently, when threatened, rather than biting, the common tree snake secretes a strong odor from the cloaca.



HOUSING: Common tree snakes can be kept in glass enclosures. As a general rule of thumb, the length of the vivarium should be at least 1.5 times the length of the snake. Furthermore, the height of the enclosure should be greater than the length of the enclosure to provide sufficient space for the common tree snake to climb on branches. That being said, providing ample amounts of natural branches and vines is crucial. At night the snakes can sleep in tree hollows, natural hides, or within the foliage. There are many options for substrate including moss, leaf litter, recycled paper cat litter, paper towel, and wooden shavings. To keep the humidity high, the enclosure should be misted with warm water every couple of days and the water bowl should be placed under the heat lamp.

TEMPERATURE & LIGHTING: Similar to other diurnal snakes and reptiles, the common tree snake requires both UVA and UVB lighting, which should be replaced every 4-6 months. During the summer months, the light should be switched on for roughly 12 hours each day. During the winter months, the amount of daylight can be reduced to 10 hours a day.

A temperature gradient should always be provided by placing a heating lamp at one side of the vivarium, ensuring the snake cannot physically reach the lamp and get burned. Being from the northern and northeastern areas of Australia, common tree snakes require warmer temperatures with the basking spot reaching 36-38°C and the cool end reaching 20°C. Heat





mats within the enclosure and heat rocks are not recommended as they often malfunction and lead to thermal burns.

WATER: Fresh clean water should be provided at all times in a solid, spill-proof container and changed regularly.

FOOD: Common tree snakes have faster metabolism than most snakes so can generally be fed 1 to 3 times a week. A variety of foods may be offered including feeder fish, frogs, tadpoles, reptiles/skinks, and mice.

HEALTH PROBLEMS: Reptiles in general are very good at hiding their health problems until they become very serious. For this reason, it is very important that you get your snake checked over by an experienced reptile veterinarian every 6-12 months.

Common problems where veterinary advice is recommended are wheezing, dysecdysis (trouble shedding), prolonged inappetence outside of the cooler months of the year, lethargy, diarrhoea, abnormal movement and regurgitation.

QUARANTINE: The length of quarantine is a contentious area with many different protocols implemented across the world. With the recent advancements in our understanding of reptile viruses and diseases it now appears that we may not be able to 'out-quarantine' some of the newly discovered reptile viruses which makes recommended a time-frame complicated. Most reptile veterinarians now recommend a quarantine period of at least 6 months for newly acquired snakes. Quarantined animals should be kept in a separate room with no shared contact or airspace. Any handling, feeding or cleaning of the cages should be completed last after all the other non-quarantined animals. If further work needs to be done with the rest of the collection after the animals in quarantine then a complete change of clothes and a thorough disinfection of hands and any equipment used is recommended.

If you have any further questions about your snake please don't hesitate to contact us.

