



## CARING FOR YOUR RAT SNAKE

**Scientific Name:** *Pantherophis (Elaphe) obsoleta spp*  
**Native to:** *Varies depending on species*  
**Maximum Length:** *Up to 8 feet*  
**Life Span:** *12 to 20 Years*

### CHARACTERISTICS:

Rat snakes are long, slender snakes found in a wide variety of habitats. They are active and adaptable, capable of climbing and swimming with ease in search of prey. Their attitude and appetite for domestic birds often puts them at odds with their human neighbors, but they pose no actual threat and are actually quite beneficial at keeping pest populations down in farming areas. In captivity, they make wonderful pets.

### CARE TIPS:

**Enclosure:** Rat snakes enjoy their space, but are also shy and benefit from lots of hiding places. Be sure your enclosure is secure as rat snakes are capable of squeezing through very small cracks. A 20 gallon terrarium is suitable for a juvenile. Adults will be happiest with at least a 55 gallon.

**Substrate:** Wood shavings such as aspen or cypress will provide a more natural look while also allowing for burrowing and spot-cleaning. Avoid oily, odorous woods such as cedar or pine as these can be detrimental to the health of the snake.

**Temperature and Lighting:** Being cold blooded, your snake can only regulate its body temperature by physically moving to colder or warmer areas, so it's important that you provide your snake with a range to choose from. Such a gradient is easiest to achieve with longer enclosures and a single heat source on one side. Many rat snakes prefer temperatures in the mid-80s on the warm side, then mid-70s for the cool side. You should use a thermostat to prevent overheating and to adjust the temperatures as needed. A light cycle can help regulate their feeding and breeding response. An under tank heater is the best method for providing heat.

**Food and Water:** Fresh, clean water should be provided at all times. The dish should be large enough for the snake to soak in and heavy enough so that the snake cannot knock it over. Baby Rat Snakes will feed on small pinky mice. As the Rat Snake grows it can eat fuzzy mice, adult mice and some of the larger species will even be able to eat smaller rats. Frozen/thawed rodents, such as [Mack's Natural Reptile Food Frozen Rodents](#), are always best because live rodents may harm your snake. Rat Snake appetites diminish during winter months. Always provide a fresh bowl of water. Rat Snakes love to soak in their water, especially before they shed. Rat snakes don't need much humidity until they begin their shed. Signs your snake is about to begin its shed are dull scales and cloudy eyes.