

OVERVIEW						
<p>The kingsnakes and milksnakes of the genus <i>Lampropeltis</i> can make excellent pets. Some may be a bit nervous and fast-moving, especially when young, but these two to three foot snakes are beautiful, hardy and easy to raise. Hatchlings of the most popular kingsnake and milksnake species usually have eager appetites and readily accept newborn (pinky) mice. They are easy to switch from live to thawed-from-frozen rodents, which is preferable both for the snake's safety and your convenience. Adults will eat full-grown mice. In the wild, these snakes show a preference for other reptiles, including snakes, so it is very important to always house individually and alone, except during breeding attempts.</p>						
ENVIRONMENT						
Conditions »	Day Temp	75-85°F	Night Temp	65-75°F	Humidity	40-60%
Heat Source »	Belly heat; thermostat-controlled undertank heat mat at one end of enclosure					
HOUSING						
<p>Kingsnakes and milksnakes should be housed individually in secure enclosures. Snakes are escape artists and any housing must prevent even the smallest opportunity for the snake to exit. Clear plastic shoe and sweater boxes are popular for hatchling kings and milks, and small plastic terrariums may also be used. An aquarium will also work and a 20 gallon long is sufficiently large for an adult.</p> <p>Heat is best provided using a heat tape or mat beneath one end of the enclosure. It should be situated to provide a thermal gradient from the warmer heated end of the housing to the cooler end. Heat sources should always be controlled with a thermostat to prevent overheating.</p> <p>Substrate may be paper (newsprint or paper toweling works great) for a simple, sanitary enclosure and zero risk of substrate ingestion. Other possibilities include wood products such as sani-chips, aspen, fir bark (Repti-Bark™) or cypress mulch. DO NOT USE aromatic woods such as cedar! Also avoid gravel, sand, and corn cob.</p> <p>Kingsnakes and milksnakes like security. Make sure the enclosure is not overly large and provide a couple of hiding places – at least one at the warm end and one at the cooler end of the housing. Fresh water should be available at all times in a small dish that cannot be easily overturned.</p>						
DIET						
<p>Although they favor other reptiles in nature, popular kingsnake and milksnake species feed well on rodents. Hatchlings begin feeding on live pinky mice and gradually mouse size can be increased (approx. diameter of head) as the snake grows. After the snake has begun feeding regularly (every 4-5 days for hatchlings, every 7-10 days for larger snakes), it is usually easy to switch the snake to accepting thawed frozen rodents from forceps.</p>						