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Wheat Snake

Adequate temperature		
	Hot spot	Cold spot
Day temperature	29 °C	25 °C
Night temperature	22 °C	20 °C

Main Features :

The wheat snake is part of the colubrid family. Its life expectancy is around 15 years, although captive species often reach the age of 20. Its adult size is 60 cm to 150 cm. Of usually terrestrial behavior, this snake can be climber. His round-eyed eyes give him a good view of the day, although he is a nocturnal species. His periods of activity are early in the morning or late in the day. Its basic color is brownish, however, there are snakes of orange wheats. It is not recommended to keep a couple or group of this species in the same vivarium, as it is quite solitary. The handling of this snake is usually not difficult because it is quite docile and quiet.

Captivity:

Wheat snake habitat must be at least 20 gallons in size and must have a lid, heating system and lighting system emitting ultraviolet rays. The wheat snake likes to climb! It is therefore necessary to provide a strong branch where it can climb at will. The addition of small strong branches and foliage will allow it to hide in order to feel safe. Humidity (50%) and temperature (see table above) should be carefully monitored to maintain the health of your snake. To maintain the proper temperature, a heating mat, out of reach of the animal, can be used as well as a heat lamp not accessible for the latter. The carpet must be installed under the terrarium to avoid any direct contact. If the animal has access to the heating source, the risk of burns is close to 100%. A reptile does not feel the heat on its skin, it is only once it is too late that it feels the wound. The wheat snake must have a UV lamp in its habitat! This lamp is essential to his good health because it provides a source of calcium that is normally provided by the sun during his tanning sessions. This lamp should work 10-12h per day and be changed every 6 months to maintain its effectiveness! At night this lamp should be off, unlike the heat lamp that must work all day. In order to better control the time of exposure to UV light, the degree of humidity and to maintain an adequate temperature, it is strongly recommended to obtain a thermometer and a hygrometer to better control the variants. The ideal is to get a thermostat that will regulate the temperature and a timer to better control the UV lighting time, but it is important to make sure that it always works, even after several years! Adding an easy-to-clean surface (paper towels, tarpaulin, etc.) as a substrate is recommended. A gravel or sand substrate is not recommended due to the risk of the animal ingesting this product, which can cause intestinal blockage. It is however possible to use sand if you feed your



snake out of its vivarium. Moreover, it is strongly recommended to feed your snake out of the vivarium to reduce the risk of biting. The addition of two hiding places, one in the hot spot and the other in the cold spot, will fill the needs of your snake.

Food:

In nature, the wheat snake feeds on birds and small rodents. In captivity, it can be limited to giving only rodents, such as mice or rats of appropriate size according to the size of your snake. It is therefore possible to buy baby mice (fuzzy or pinky) already frozen. It is strongly recommended to feed your snake with freshly killed prey or frozen and warmed (not in the microwave) if it tolerates it well. This kind of practice will avoid the risk of bites and trauma to your snake. The frequency of meals varies with age. A juvenile should be fed at 5-7 days and an adult at 7-14 days. An adult snake can eat between one and four adult mice per meal, or one to two 21-day-old rats.



Frequent health problems:

- **Infections:** Infections can occur in the mouth (stomatitis), on the skin (bacterial or fungal) or in the form of abscess. This condition is often the cause of poor nutrition, excess moisture or poor hygiene.
- **Parasites:** A snake can sometimes catch parasites in many ways, such as having been outside, being in a boarding house or pet shop or coming from their live food (mice, insects, etc.). If the animal is not treated following the appearance of parasites, it could become anemic and die. Parasites feed on your pet's blood, where they can find the nutrients they need for survival.
- **Moult problem:** A reptile moults several times a year. The moult consists of a change of skin. The animal grows up and the scales become too tight on it. He develops new ones and the old ones have to leave. A moult problem occurs when the degree of humidity is not adequate. When a skin starts to come off, it is important not to shoot.
- **Obstruction:** An uninformed owner may offer an oversized animal as a meal to his snake. The snake sometimes has eyes bigger than the belly and tries to eat its prey. That's when he risks choking!
- **Cloacal Prolapse:** A cloacal prolapse is an externalization of part of the digestive system of your reptile. It is therefore possible to see part of the intestine of your reptile out its cloaca (opening that connects the anus and the reproductive system).

As with all animals, it is recommended that an examination be conducted after the purchase of a new reptile and an annual check is required. The annual exam helps prevent health problems that may occur and thus save the life of your pet. If in doubt, a visit to the veterinarian is required! A reptile, whatever it is, will hide its symptoms so as not to become an easy prey for predators (humans). At the slightest change in behavior, contact your veterinarian.

