

Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

Garter Snakes (Thamnophis sp.)

General Information

There are over 70 different species and sub-species of garter snakes found throughout North America. They are a smaller snake and adults can range between 15-48 inches depending on the species. Garter snake habitat varies by species and they can be found in forests, deserts, swamps, and grasslands. The most common garter snakes are; Red-Sided, Eastern, Plains, Wandering, and Blue-Striped. Garter snakes have live birth and clutches vary between 15-50 babies. During the winter, these snakes are found in dens with thousands of individuals where they stay until spring. Reproduction in the wild is fascinating and these snakes breed after hibernation. In some areas a group of males will try to mate with one female and form "breeding balls". Garters are secretive snakes and will do best if provided with some type of hiding place. With proper care you can expect your garter snake to live 10-15 years or more. Prehistoric Pets promotes responsible snake ownership and we recommend locking cages that prevent accidental escape. Escaped snakes can have a negative impact on the general public which can lead to a ban of snake ownership.



Temperature

Garter snakes need to be maintained between 84-88 degrees during the day. Nighttime temperatures should range between 68-75 degrees. If you keep your snake too cool it can regurgitate, so make sure the temperatures are maintained.

Housing

Garter snakes can be housed comfortably in a 29-40 gallon terrarium as adults. Ideally the larger the snake the more room you want to provide. Never place a cage near a window where sunlight can directly shine on your cage. Cages placed in direct sunlight can easily overheat and ultimately lead to the death of your snake.

Bedding

Almost any type of bedding can be used for garter snakes. We recommend using carpet, bark, or Eco Earth. A deep layer is recommended to allow your snake to hide if it chooses to do so.

Food

Garter snakes feed on appropriate sized mice, earthworms, frogs, toads, and fish. We recommend that you feed baby and juvenile garter snakes 1-2 times per week. Adult garter snakes can be fed once every 5-10 days to maintain proper body weight. Like most snakes, garter snakes typically will not eat when they are preparing to shed. After your snake has shed you can return to your normal feeding regiment. If your snake doesn't eat make sure you remove the rodent from the cage. Rodents, when they are hungry, can bite snakes and can injure or kill them.

Cleaning and Handling

The terrarium should be cleaned as necessary. Any fecal matter should be cleaned out several times a week. The bedding should be completely changed once a month and fresh clean water should be provided at all times. The inside of the terrarium can be cleaned out with an appropriate reptile cage cleaner, we recommend Natural Chemistry's Healthy Habitat. Garter snakes can be handled on a daily basis and always wash your hands before and after handling them.

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