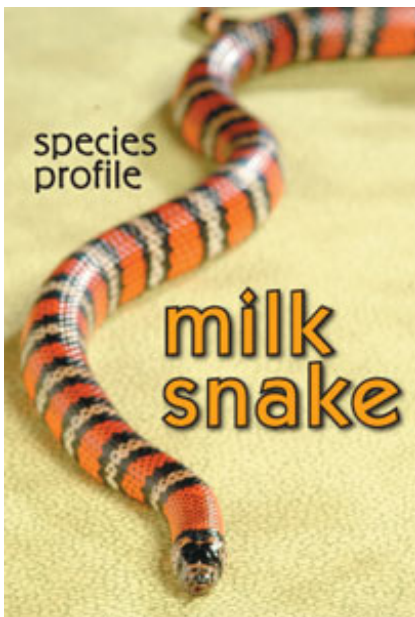
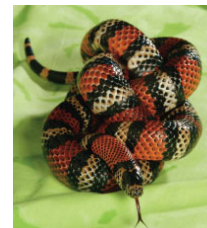


## Milk Snake

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



**M**ilk snakes are solitary creatures and should not be housed with other reptiles. In fact, if housed with another reptile, the milk snake would likely eat it. It's also important to provide a very secure cage as milk snakes are amazing escape artists. In nature, milk snakes have a wider geographical range than most other species of snake and can thrive in a variety of habitats.



### Species Profile: Milk Snake

**Scientific Name:** *Lampropeltis triangulum*

**Natural Environment:** Southeastern Canada to northern South America.

**Average Size:** 2-6 ft long.

**Average Life Span:** 15 years.

**Appearance:** This species is represented by 3 general patterns: tri-colored in which the snake possesses bold rings of white/yellow, black, and red/orange. The other common pattern is light tan, gray or cream background color with darker red, russet or brown dorsal and lateral blotches. The last pattern belongs only to the black milk snake. This snake starts out tri-colored but turns into a completely patternless black snake by 2 years of age.

#### Habitat

**Lighting:** Added light is not necessary if temperatures can be maintained within the desired ranges with a heat pad. If lighting is necessary, use blue, red or black colored lights to reduce the brightness.

**Temperature:** 78°-82°F by day, down to 65°-70°F at night. Unless hibernating, milk snakes should always have access to warmer localized temperatures. These temperatures are most easily achieved by placing a heat pad underneath 1/4-1/3 of the enclosure and monitoring to make sure it stays within 84°-88°F.

**Humidity:** 40-60%, higher during shedding.

**Housing:** The cage length should be at least two-thirds of the snake's body length and should possess multiple hiding areas. The opening to the enclosure must be secure. The enclosure should always be dry and should contain a sturdy water bowl for drinking. Milk snakes thrive in particulate substrates they can bury themselves in. Acceptable choices are aspen shavings, soil, dampened sphagnum moss, bark, and mulch-type commercial material. Do not house with other snakes and reptiles.

**Diet/Feeding:** In nature, milk snakes feed on a number of small vertebrates, including frogs, small rodents, other snakes and lizards. In captivity, most milk snakes will eagerly feed on domestically bred, pre-killed mice. A good rule of thumb is that the food item should not be larger than 1-1/2 times the girth of the snake at its widest point. Never feed foods procured from the wild, as they will transmit harmful internal parasites.

**Behavior/Interaction:** As the milk snake gets ready to shed, its eyes will turn a milky blue over the course of a few days and its body color will start to dull and develop a whitish sheen. The snake's appetite may diminish during winter months.