



## **Rough Green Snake** ***Opheodrys aestivus***

**Life span : Up to 15 years**

**Length : Up to 48 inches**

### **DESCRIPTION**

The Rough Green Snake is a small, slim, active snake native to eastern USA, and can be found in long grass, bushes, trees and other areas of dense foliage. It is a diurnal, egg laying species that is arboreal in nature and this characteristic should be taken into consideration when housing the Rough Green Snake in captivity.

Unlike most pet snake species, Rough Green snakes are mainly insectivorous. In the wild they prey on insects, spiders and occasionally small amphibians.

In captivity they display some fantastic behaviours, and are very sociable and interested in their owners activities.

### **PURCHASING**

When purchasing your rough green snake, be careful to purchase captive bred animals, if possible, as wild caught snakes can sometimes prove difficult to keep. Always purchase your snake from a reliable source - if you cannot be sure where the snake came from then do not buy it. In the same way, the seller should be able to tell you when the snake last had a meal, shed its skin etc.

These snakes are fairly quick moving snakes, and therefore not for the beginner. I have found them to be naturally inquisitive snakes, and once used to handling they will become calm after a few seconds. Before handling your new snake, give it 3 or 4 days to settle into its new home.

### **HOUSING / LIGHTING / TEMPERATURE**

Your rough green snake should be housed in an arboreal terrarium of about 24 x 15 x 15 (H D W) - because of their need to climb and move around they need plenty of space to do this. They are best suited in an all glass terrarium. They are one of the few snakes that need UVB lighting, and this should be provided for about 12 hours a day.

Rough green snakes can be housed in small groups of 2 or 3 and extra space should be allowed for each additional animal. By housing them in groups, they are far more interesting to observe, in terms of sociability and behaviours.

I use a heat mat to heat my tank, with a large water bowl in the centre of the tank. This

keeps humidity between 55 and 65% and temperature between 75 and 85 degrees farenheit (when you turn the UVB light off, the temperature will drop to an adequate night time gradient). The snakes will drink from the water bowl, but also like to drink water droplets, and so I also mist their vivarium once a day - be careful not to spray the enclosure too heavily as this will increase humidity and could lead to respiratory infections.

Rough green snakes like to climb and hide in foliage, therefore I have branches for them to climb and plastic foliage for them to hide in - they spend the majority of their time in the foliage and high in the branches. These are commercially available in reptile shops.

I have tried many different substrates with my snakes, and their preferred substrate is coconut husk - this is available inexpensively in freeze dried blocks (just add water). I have found a layer about 1 to 2 inches thick is best (with the water bowl pushed into it). Rough green snakes like to burrow in their substrate - sometimes staying underneath it for warmth, but also popping their heads and necks up and swaying from side to side like grass in a breeze! This is similar to their natural behaviour.

You can also use paper towels, dry leaves (if collected outside, these should be frozen before being used, to kill off any potential parasites) and reptile "carpet" or astro turf.

Due to the sociable nature of these snakes they should be housed in a place where they can observe the comings and goings of the house. This will make for a much more active snake or group, and much happier animals. They love to watch what is happening around them and show great interest in what happens outside their enclosure.

These snakes are regular Houdini's so make sure any enclosure is escape proof!

### **FEEDING**

Rough green snakes feed primarily on insects, and therefore mine are fed crickets. The feeder insect should be no thicker than the thickest part of your snakes body. I feed mine 2 or 3 each, every other day, and this has allowed them to thrive. When your snake is growing though, it will need more. Feed as many as your snake will eat in a "sitting" every other day. Once a week the crickets should be dusted with a calcium/vitamin supplement powder.

When available I give mine the odd treat insect - a wild caught crane fly, spider or moth (small ones - just bear in mind the size of your snake).

### **HANDLING**

Opinion on the handling of these snakes is split - many care sheets state that they should not be handled at all as they are too "flighty". Personally I find them a delight to handle. They actually seem to enjoy being handled, and the interaction associated with handling.

At first they are "flighty", but given a few seconds to realise that they will not be hurt, they soon calm down, and will intertwine your fingers and wrap around your wrist and then just sit and observe for as long as you wish to sit for! They are very delicate animals, and should be handled with care. Starting with short bursts of handling, your snake will soon get used to being taken from the enclosure - once used to it though, the minute you open the door, they will make a bid for freedom!!

**CLEANING**

Water : Your snakes may defecate in their water bowl, get substrate in it or crickets may drown in it. It is best and safest for the snake to offer fresh water every day.

Enclosure : The enclosure should be spot cleaned every day to remove faeces from the substrate. If using paper towels, then replace the paper towel when it is dirtied. If you are using other substrate then the enclosure should be fully cleaned and the substrate replaced every 4-6 weeks. If plastic plants are soiled then they should be removed and washed when this occurs.

Cleaning solution : I use a solution which is 1% household unscented bleach, and 1% washing up liquid mixed with warm water. I make this solution in a spray bottle, which makes cleaning a breeze. When cleaning plants and other decorations, I use the same mixture in a bucket to allow soaking.

Everything washed in this solution should be rinsed in clean water and thoroughly dried to prevent the snakes absorbing any of the chemicals into their bodies.

**DISEASE**

If your animal appears to be unwell at any time then please consult a qualified reptile vet. This can be spotted by a change in the behaviour of the animal - from very active to inactive, and a lack lustre appearance - especially dull eyes.

When you handle your snake examine its scales to ensure that it is healthy - look for the possibility of mites (treat with Ardap mite control - used in poultry - treat enclosure NOT snake). Also look at the eyes and mouth, if possible, for any sign of illness (such as mouth rot - a cheesy substance). If you can listen to your snake - if it appears to be breathing abnormally then it may have picked up a respiratory infection (usually caused by humidity being too high).

***Most of all . . . . .ENJOY YOUR SNAKE :)***