

Pueblan Milk Snakes

Lampropeltis triangulum campbelli

BEGINNER · 2.5–3.5 FT ADULT · 15–20 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · MEXICO

A tricolor snake with a beginner's temperament and a fifteen-year minimum attached to it. Pueblan milk snakes come out of Mexico banded in red, black and white, and they stay modest: three feet of snake in a four-foot box. The honest headline is appetite. Kingsnake relatives eat other snakes in the wild, so this one lives alone, always, and it will test your fingers if they smell like mice.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	2.5–3.5 feet
Ambient temp	75–85 °F (70–75 °F night)
Basking spot	85–88 °F
Humidity	40–60%
UVB	Low UVB beneficial
Diet	Mice (frozen/thawed)
Feeding	Every 7–10 days
Lifespan	15–20 years



Pueblan milk snakes wear red, black and white banding, and captive-bred ones fill breeder tables at every NARBC show.

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01

Temperament & Handling

Pueblans earn the beginner label as adults: calm in hand, easy to read, quick to settle. Hatchlings are a different animal. They're fast, they musk, and they'll vibrate the tail against dry substrate like a rattler bluff. None of it is aggression; it's a small snake doing small-snake math. Short, regular sessions settle most of that down. Even then, handling is tolerated rather than wanted, and the snake is at its best working the enclosure after dark.

02

Housing: One Snake, One Box

Floor space beats height. A Pueblan wants a long, low box with lids that latch, because they're patient escape artists and a gap the width of a pencil is a door. Give two hides, one at each end, and enough clutter that the snake can cross the floor without ever feeling exposed. On company: **never house milk snakes together**. This genus eats other snakes, including its own kind. One snake, one enclosure, for life.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	12×8×6	16×8×8	Small, slender hatchlings; escape-proof latches matter more than floor space.
Juvenile	16×12×8	20×12×12	Hardy small milksnake; horizontal floor beats height at every stage.
Subadult	20×12×12	24×18×12	Reaches near-adult size by 2 years; upsize on the animal, not the calendar.
Adult	36×18×12	48×18×12	2.5–3.5 ft adult; racks are conditional here, so give floor space and cover.

Minimum and preferred footprints from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Horizontal floor space at every stage; height is a bonus, not the priority.

03

Heat, Light & UVB

Run the gradient down the long axis: 75–85 °F ambient, a warm end at 85–88 °F, and nights allowed to drop to 70–75 °F. Every heat source goes on a thermostat, and heat rocks stay out of the enclosure entirely. Low UVB is beneficial here rather than required; a low-output tube over the warm end is cheap insurance, provided the snake can always retreat into full shade. Trust a probe and an infrared gun over the dial on the equipment.

04

Humidity, Water and Shedding

Aim for 40–60%, which most homes hit without much effort. This is a middle-of-the-road humidity animal: too dry and sheds come off in pieces, too wet and scale rot follows. A water bowl heavy enough not to tip, big enough to soak in, refilled and scrubbed weekly, does most of the work. If a shed sticks, raise humidity with a damp hide rather than misting the whole box. Never peel a stuck shed off dry skin.

05

Substrate and Cover

Pueblans burrow. Give a deep layer of loose, dry-ish bedding they can tunnel through: aspen holds a burrow well, cypress mulch or coconut husk holds a little more moisture. Skip loose sand, especially under young snakes; it packs down, it abrades, and swallowed grit has nowhere good to go. Then add the part keepers skip: cork flats, leaf litter, a low branch, sight breaks. A snake with cover uses the whole enclosure. A bare one picks a corner and stays there.

06

Feeding and Food Response

Mice, start to finish. Hatchlings take pinkies, adults work up to adult mice, and a healthy snake eats every 7–10 days, growing animals at the short end of that window. Frozen/thawed is the standard: safer for the snake, easier on you. Keep prey about as wide as the snake's thickest point, no wider. The one thing to respect is the feeding response. Pueblans hit hard and hold; offer with long tongs, never fingers, and give the snake a beat to register that your hand is not dinner.

07

Health Red Flags

Regurgitation is the loud one. A snake that throws up a meal is telling you the setup is too cold, the prey too big, or something is wrong inside. Rest it two weeks, fix the cause, then offer something smaller. A second regurgitation is a reptile-vet visit. Watch also for bubbling or open-mouth breathing, cheesy material along the gumline, and black specks in the water bowl, which means mites. Weigh monthly; a milk snake this size hides a slow decline.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual - when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.