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the warning signal Tail Behavior Imitator: rocks the fake rattle Genuine rattle: loud and clear Being clued-up about these snake details makes it simpler to spot the differences between these slippery customers while trekking through the wild. Want more about knowing your gopher snakes? Check our page on how to identify a gopher snake. Curious about the different kinds of gopher snakes? Take a look at what we've written on the pacific gopher snake, Sonoran gopher snake, and great basin gopher snake. Identifying Gopher Snakes Spotting gopher snakes can be a bit tricky because they sometimes look like the much-feared rattlesnakes. Knowing what sets them apart can help keep you safe and sure around these non-venomous, slithery friends. What's Different About Them? Gopher snakes aren't your average snakes; they have a few standout features that make them easier to spot from a rattlesnake: Head Shape: Unlike rattlesnakes with their classic triangle heads, gopher snakes sport a more egg-shaped noggin. But don't be fooled—when feeling spooked, gopher snakes can flatten their heads to mimic that triangle look. Pupils: Check their eyes! Gopher snakes have big, round pupils, not the cat-like slits you see on rattlesnakes. Tail: No rattle here! Gopher snakes might shake their tail in leaves to fake the rattlesnake sound when they're feeling jumpy. Body Color: They tend to have more chill colors—think creams, browns, and yellows, unlike the bold designs on a rattler (A-Z Animals). Scales: Feel those bumpy scales? Gopher snakes have rough, ridged ones (The Bio Dude). How to Tell Them Apart If you're stuck on whether it's a gopher or a rattler, try these handy tricks: Tail Watch: Both might shake their tails, but only the rattlesnake has that tell-tale rattle sound. Head and Eyes Check: Look close! An egg-shaped head and round eyes usually mean you're looking at a gopher snake. Color and Pattern: Gopher snakes come with soft hues and simple patterns, unlike the dazzling display of rattlesnakes (A-Z Animals). Sound Clue: No clickety-clack rattle? You might be dealing with a gopher snake. Want more insights on these fascinating critters? Check out these guides: Knowing your snakes makes hanging out with nature a whole lot safer and more fun. And next time, you'll be able to tell your pals, "Hey, that's just a gopher snake!" with confidence. Gopher Snake Habitat and Care Giving your gopher snake a comfy home is key to keeping it happy and healthy. Here's a lowdown on what you need to know about these slithery fellas—their size, how long they stick around, and what makes a perfect hangout spot for 'em. Size and Lifespan Gopher snakes, depending on which kind they are, can stretch anywhere from 3.5 feet up to a whopping 7 feet! They've got quite the lifespan too—most live around 15 years, but with some TLC, they can reach the grand old age of 33. Subspecies Average Size (feet) Lifespan (years) Pacific Gopher Snake 4 – 7 15 – 30 Sonoran Gopher Snake 4 – 6 15 – 30 California Gopher Snake 3.5 – 7 15 – 33 Great Basin Gopher Snake 4 – 6 15 – 30 San Diego Gopher Snake 3.5 – 6 15 – 25 Housing and Enclosure Requirements Making a perfect home for your scaly buddy is all about getting the basics right. Here's what they need: These snakes love their space. A cozy spot about 4 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 2 feet tall lets them stretch and sneak around comfortably. Keep things warm and toasty on one side with a basking area around 85°F. The other side should be cooler, hanging around 70-72°F. Think of it like their personal sauna. A decent halogen spotlight, like the 75w Arcadia one, works wonders. And hey—maybe ditch your old thermometer for a digital one to get it just right. Being daytime roamers, gopher snakes get a kick out of UVB lighting for their general vibe. Try UVB options like the Arcadia Forest 6% or the Zoo Med Reptisun T5 HO 5.0 and set them up with the heat lamp to keep things warm and bright. Go for aspen bedding or cypress mulch underfoot, great for a bit of digging around. Toss in some hidey holes, branches, and rocks to make it feel just like home sweet home for them. A shallow water dish lets them sip and dip whenever they please. Keep humidity chillin' out at about 40-60% for that just-right feel. With the right spot to rest their scales, your gopher snake will be living its best life. For more tips on how to roll out the welcome mat for your snake, check out our gopher snake care guides. Gopher Snake Husbandry Looking after a gopher snake isn't too tricky, as long as you keep an eye on its lighting, temperature, and chow-down schedule. Nailing these basics helps your snake feel right at home, even when it's not. Lighting and Temperature Needs Gopher snakes keep busy during the daytime, needing solid light to keep their spirits up. Your scaly buddy needs UVB lighting in their crib (or terrarium, as the fancy folks call it). Trusty bulbs like Arcadia Forest 6% and Zoo Med Reptisun T5 HO 5.0 work great here. Make sure these bask in the glow of heat lamps on the warmer side of their enclosure. Temperature Spot You're Aiming For Sunbathing Zone ~85°F Nippy Side 70-72°F To keep those temps in check, grab halogen flood heat bulbs like the 75W Arcadia Halogen Basking Spot for some dome heat action. Slip in a digital probe thermometer in there to make sure you're not boiling or freezing your pet—just like you wouldn't want your thermostat going rogue at home. Feeding and Health Maintenance Chowin' down on the right, rodent-sized snacks is what keeps a gopher snake in tip-top shape. Little ones eat more often than the big critters, so keep their groceries lined up. Age Category Chow Time Youngsters Every 5-7 days Big Kids Every 10-14 days Don't hand them anything bigger than their middle, and keep an eye out for red flags like flaky shedding or skipping meals. Want more deets? Check out our full guide on gopher snake care for the lowdown. Giving your gopher snake the right light, temperature, and snacks is key to a happy, healthy pet. Dig deeper into different gopher snake varieties like the Sonoran or the California gopher snake for some extra pointers.