Different Kinds Of Corn Snakes

Different Kinds Of Corn Snakes *Downloaded from remodelicious.com by Deandre & Harold*

INTRODUCTION: THE DAZZLING DIVERSITY OF THE CORN SNAKE

The corn snake (*Pantherophis guttatus*) is one of the most beloved reptiles in the pet trade, and for good reason. These North American colubrids are known for their docile temperament, manageable size, and relatively simple care requirements. However, what truly sets the corn snake apart is the breathtaking array of colors and patterns available through selective breeding. When we talk about the **different kinds of corn snakes**, we are entering a world where nature and human artistry combine to produce living jewels. This guide will take you through the various morphs and types, helping you understand what makes each one unique, from the classic wild-type to the most intricate designer morphs. Whether you are a first-time snake owner or a seasoned herpetoculturist, understanding these varieties will deepen your appreciation for this remarkable species.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUNDATION: THE WILD-TYPE CORN SNAKE

Before diving into the dazzling array of designer morphs, it is essential to understand the baseline. The wild-type, or "normal" corn snake, is the foundation from which all other varieties are derived. These snakes are native to the southeastern United States, ranging from New Jersey to the Florida Keys. The typical wild corn snake displays a striking pattern of orange, brown, or reddish blotches outlined in black against a background of gray, orange, or tan. This pattern serves as excellent camouflage in leaf litter and underbrush. The belly of a wild-type corn snake is equally distinctive, featuring a black-and-white checkerboard pattern that resembles Indian corn, which is how the species got its common name. Understanding this natural template is crucial because every morph is a genetic modification of these base characteristics.

WHAT DEFINES A "MORPH"? A GENETIC PRIMER

A morph is a color or pattern variation that is genetically inherited. In corn snakes, these variations are caused by mutations in specific genes that control pigmentation and pattern formation. Many of these mutations are recessive, meaning that both parents must carry the gene for the offspring to visually express the trait. However, some are co-dominant or dominant. The result is a fascinating spectrum of possibilities. When we categorize the different kinds of corn snakes, we are essentially cataloguing the different combinations of these genes. Some morphs affect the production of melanin (black pigment), while others affect the red or yellow pigments. Some morphs alter the distribution of these pigments, creating stripes, spots, or solid colors. The genetic complexity is part of the appeal for enthusiasts who enjoy predicting outcomes and developing new combinations.

THE MAJOR COLOR MORPHS: A WORLD OF PIGMENT

Amelanistic Corn Snakes: The Red Factor

One of the most common and striking morphs is the Amelanistic, often called "Amel." This morph is caused by a recessive mutation that eliminates melanin, the black pigment. Without melanin, the snake's dark outlines and patterns disappear, leaving behind bright oranges, reds, and yellows. An Amel corn snake typically has a white or cream background with brilliant orange to red blotches. Their eyes are pink or red due to the lack of pigment in the iris. This morph is the foundation for many other "red" morphs, such as the "Candy Cane" (a selectively bred Amel with a pure white background and bright red blotches) and the "Reverse Okeetee" (an Amel version of the Okeetee phase, with wide white borders around red blotches).

Anerythristic Corn Snakes: The Charcoal Effect

Opposite to the Amel, the Anerythristic morph (often shortened to "Anery") eliminates red pigment. This results in a snake that appears in shades of gray, black, and silver. Anerythristic corn snakes are sometimes called "black and white" corn snakes, though they often have a subtle yellow or tan hue that develops along the neck and throat as they mature. There are two main types: Anery A and Anery B. Anery B is also known as "Charcoal." While similar to Anery A, Charcoal morphs typically have a more muted, dark gray appearance with less contrast. They are a key component in creating other morphs like the "Blizzard" (Charcoal + Amel) and the "Ghost" (Hypomelanistic + Anery).

Hypomelanistic Corn Snakes: Less is More

The Hypomelanistic morph, or "Hypo," is a reduction in melanin, but not a complete elimination like the Amel. This results in snakes that have bright, vibrant colors with reduced black pigment. The blotches are still present, but they are outlined in gray or brown rather than jet black. Hypos tend to have very clean, high-contrast appearances. This morph is often used in combination with others to "clean up" the pattern and create brighter, more vibrant versions of other morphs. A "Ghost" corn snake, for example, is a combination of Hypo and Anery, resulting in a beautiful, muted snake with subtle pastel tones.

Other Notable Color Morphs

Beyond the Big Three (Amel, Anery, Hypo), there are numerous other color-altering morphs. The **Lavender** morph produces a stunning pastel purple or lavender hue with darker, often brownish blotches. The **Caramel** morph affects the red and yellow pigments, resulting in a warm, buttery yellow and tan pattern. The **Crimson** morph is a deep, rich red. The **Butter** morph (Amel + Caramel) produces a beautiful pastel yellow

snake with pinkish eyes. Each of these morphs adds a unique dimension to the palette of available corn snakes.

PATTERN MORPHS: BEYOND THE BLOTCHES

While color morphs alter the palette, pattern morphs change the very layout of the snake's design. These are just as important when discussing different kinds of corn snakes.

Motley Corn Snakes: Connected Blotches

The Motley morph alters the typical blotched pattern in a unique way. Instead of separate, distinct blotches running down the back, a Motley corn snake has elongated, connected blotches that often form a "zigzag" or "lightning bolt" pattern. In some cases, the pattern can become so reduced that it appears as a series of spots or a solid stripe. Motleys often have a clean, unmarked belly. This morph is highly variable, and the degree of pattern reduction can vary significantly from snake to snake. The "Motley" gene is recessive.

Striped Corn Snakes: Linear Elegance

As the name implies, the Striped morph replaces the blotches with two distinct, parallel stripes that run the length of the body. These stripes can be continuous or slightly broken. The Striped gene is also recessive. Strikingly beautiful, a striped corn snake often looks almost like a different species. The "Miami Phase" striped corn snake, with its dark background and bright orange stripes, is a classic example. It is important to note that the Striped and Motley genes are actually alleles of the same locus, meaning they are different versions of the same gene. This leads to interesting genetic combinations and the "Motley-Striped" complex.

Sunkissed and Tessera: Unique Pattern Influences

The **Sunkissed** morph is a recessive trait that produces a unique, painterly effect. The pattern often appears "melted" or blurred, with soft edges between the blotches and the background color. The colors are typically warm and rich. The **Tessera** morph, on the other hand, is a dominant mutation. It produces a snake with a distinctive, almost prehistoric-looking pattern of dorsal stripes and lateral speckling. Tesseras are incredibly popular for their very different look and are used extensively in breeding projects to add a clean, striped dorsal element to other morphs.

COMBINATION MORPHS: THE ART OF THE DESIGNER SNAKE

Advanced breeders combine multiple genetic traits to create truly spectacular animals. These are often referred to as "designer" corn snakes. The possibilities are nearly endless, but some of the most famous combinations include:

- **Snow Corn Snake:** A combination of Amel and Anery. These snakes are pure white or cream with subtle yellow or pink markings. They have pink or red eyes.
- **Blizzard Corn Snake:** A combination of Amel and Charcoal. This results in a snake that is almost pure white with a very clean appearance and dark gray eyes.
- **Ghost Corn Snake:** A combination of Hypo and Anery. These are striking silver-gray snakes with subtle, soft patterns. They are often described as looking like they are made of shadow.
- **Blood Red Corn Snake:** A selectively bred line that emphasizes deep, rich red coloration from head to tail. The pattern is often diffused or faded, giving a solid red appearance. The "Diffused" gene is a recessive pattern morph that helps create this look.
- **Plasma Corn Snake:** A combination of Lavender and Diffused. This creates a stunning, soft, purplish-pink snake with a very subtle, diffused pattern.
- **Palmetto Corn Snake:** A rare and visually dramatic morph. The base color is white or cream, but the snake is covered in randomly scattered speckles of orange, red, yellow, and brown. It is truly one of a kind.
- **Scaleless Corn Snake:** A highly controversial morph. These snakes are born without scales or with greatly reduced scales. While visually striking, they require specialized care as their skin is more vulnerable. This morph is a topic of ethical debate within the herp community.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CORN SNAKE FOR YOU

With so many different kinds of corn snakes available, selecting your first snake can be overwhelming. For a first-time owner, a classic Amelanistic, Normal, or Okeetee is an excellent choice. These morphs are readily available, affordable, and robust. Anerythristic and Hypomelanistic morphs are also great options. More expensive and rare morphs, like Palmetto, Lavender, or Scaleless, may be better suited for experienced owners or breeders who have a deep understanding of genetics and specialized care. Regardless of the morph, ensure you purchase from a reputable breeder who prioritizes the health, temperament, and genetic diversity of their animals. A healthy snake, regardless of its color, will be a rewarding pet.

CONCLUSION: A SNAKE FOR EVERY AESTHETIC

The world of corn snakes is a vibrant tapestry of color and pattern. From the subtle beauty of a wild-type to the brilliant, blazing colors of an Amelanistic, to the ghostly elegance of a Ghost morph, the different kinds of corn snakes offer something for every enthusiast. Understanding these variations is not just about memorizing names; it is about appreciating the complex genetics and dedicated selective breeding that have produced this incredible diversity. Whether you are drawn to the pure simplicity of a Snow or the complex chaos of a Palmetto, each snake is a living work of art. As you begin or continue your journey into herpetoculture, remember that every morph, no matter how common or rare, carries the same gentle nature that has made the corn snake a household name. The choice, ultimately, comes down to personal taste and the simple joy of caring for a beautiful, fascinating creature.