

Red Milk Snakes



What do I look like?

I have a variety of colors. My head and snout are either red or black. My belly is a whitish color with irregular black markings. The upper part of my body has red or dark orange stripes bordered with black, separated by a band of light yellow or white. I often get mistaken for the deadly Coral Snake, because I look similar. Coral snakes have red bands bordered by yellow, but I have red bands bordered by black. Being mistaken for a venomous snake is good for me though. Most animals know to stay away from snakes with colors like mine.

Where do I live?

I like to live under rocks on rocky hillsides and cedar glades near water sources. I can be found in countries from Canada, through the United States and all the way to Ecuador in South America.



What do I eat?

I got my name because it was once believed that I liked to enter barns and steal milk from cows. Certainly this is not true and I only drink water. I mainly consume rodents. I am a constrictor, so I kill my prey by wrapping my muscular body around them and squeezing until it's suffocated. The reason people thought I stole milk is that rodents were very common in barns, so I would live there and eat them, but not to steal milk. Aside from rodents, I like to eat other small snakes, reptiles, amphibians and birds, as well as the eggs of birds and reptiles.



Some interesting things about me are...

- There is a common saying about how to tell if a snake is the non-venomous Milk Snake or if it is the deadly Coral Snake: "Red touches black, friend of Jack. Red touches yellow, kill a fellow."
- The colors on my body are a type of mimicry. That means that I copy the colors of a venomous snake so other animals will mistake me for the deadly snake and leave me alone.
- In reality, I don't have any venom at all. I am slightly resistant to other snakes' venom though.