

humaneEDUCATION

Teaching respect & compassion.



Ball Python



Introduction:

Ball pythons make excellent pets for the beginning snake owner. They are docile and easy to handle. A ball python is quite small, considering that it is a constricting snake, and will grow to a maximum size of 3-5 feet. Typically, a ball python will live between 20 and 30 years, but they have been known to live up to 50 years. Ball pythons get their name from their ability to roll up into a tight ball when threatened.

Feeding:

Pythons should be fed pre-killed mice. Young snakes need to be fed every 5-7 days, and older snakes should be fed every 10-14 days. Pythons are notorious for being finicky eaters. As long as body weight and condition are maintained, it's safe for them to fast. To entice a snake to eat, the dead mice can be dipped in chicken broth or be dangled in front of the snake.

Housing:

For an adult ball python, a 30-gallon tank is sufficient. Make sure that any enclosure is secured properly to prevent the snake from escaping. Shredded bark, newsprint or AstroTurf can be used a substrate. Sturdy branches and a dark hiding place should be provided inside the enclosure.

Heating:

During the day, the temperature inside the enclosure should be around 82°F. At night, temperatures should not fall below 75°F. Also provide an adequate basking spot with a temperature around 90°F. Stable temperatures can be reached using an under-tank heater, heat tape, spotlight, etc. Make sure that the heat source is kept away from the reptile to avoid burns. DO NOT use hot rocks because they may cause injuries.



Water/Humidity:

Fresh water should be provided in a shallow dish for drinking and soaking, the latter being a necessity during shedding. Proper humidity levels can be obtained by providing your snake with a "humidity retreat." This can be accomplished by cutting an access hole in the lid of a covered container and lining the container with sphagnum moss.

Health:

It is important for every owner to become familiar with a snake's temperament and eating habits. A snake that is ill will show signs such as wheezing, bubbling around the nostrils and clouded eyes. If you already own a constricting snake, it is recommended that any new snake be quarantined for up to six months to avoid the introduction of disease.

Myths vs. Facts

- ❖ **Myth:** Snakes are slimy.
- ❖ **Fact:** Except for the rough edges of the individual scales, a snake's skin is very smooth and dry.

- ❖ **Myth:** Snakes travel in pairs, and if one is killed the other seeks revenge.
- ❖ **Fact:** Snakes are solitary animals and are seen close together during the mating season or in ideal hiding areas.

- ❖ **Myth:** Snakes can strike only from the coiled position.
- ❖ **Fact:** Snakes are very fast and can strike from almost any position.

- ❖ **Myth:** Removing the fangs of a venomous snake makes it harmless.
- ❖ **Fact:** A snake will quickly replace lost fangs. Some snakes constantly renew their fangs!

- ❖ **Myth:** Constricting snakes kill their prey by crushing it.
- ❖ **Fact:** A constricting snake will squeeze its prey until it suffocates. It will then swallow the animal whole.

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