

Care & Information Sheet

Boa & Python

Includes common boas and ball python



Boas and pythons are among the most commonly kept snakes and come in many varieties. They are carnivorous animals and are most active at dusk while hunting for their prey on the ground or in the trees. They will remain quiet in their hiding area or coiled up for long periods of time. The average size is 3-15 feet and with proper care and nutrition, depending on the species they can live 15 to 30 years.

Habitat

- Appropriate size tank with a secure cover to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise.
- Provide a hiding area just large enough for your snake to fit inside and a branch or shelf to climb on.
- Substrate – Aspen shavings, mulch-type commercial material, unbleached paper towels, soil, dampened sphagnum moss, and barks or pelleted paper. Avoid gravel and artificial turf as they are too harsh for the snake's skin.
- Maintain humidity of 40 to 60%.
- Temperature gradient (95°F for the warm end and 78°F for the cool end) Radiant heat is recommended. Use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as a primary heat source and an undertank heater as a secondary source.
- Lighting – Snakes need a photoperiod light cycle; provide 8–12 hours daily. Do not leave white light on at all times.
- Clean the tank at least once a week. Place snake in a secure habitat, scrub tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution, rinse thoroughly with water, removing all smell of bleach, dry tank and furnishings and add clean substrate.
- Remove feces daily.

Food & Water

- Thawed, appropriate size frozen rodents, warmed to room temperature.
- Feed most adult snakes every two weeks, or as needed. Feed juveniles once or twice a week.
- Feed in a separate tank so that your snake does not associate your hand or the cage being opened with feeding.
- **If feeding your snake live rodents, do not leave them unattended. Live rodents can injure them, sometimes fatally.**
- They search their habitat when hungry, appearing alert and even restless.
- A snake's appetite may diminish during winter months.
- Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily. Use a bowl large enough for the snake to soak in.

Grooming and Hygiene

- Snakes will regularly shed their skin. Ensure humidity of habitat is at an appropriate level to allow the snake to shed properly. To facilitate shedding, bathe snake in a large container that allows snake to immerse its entire body.
- As snakes get ready to shed, their eyes will turn a milky blue over the course of a few days and their body color will start to dull and develop a whitish sheen.

Supplies

Habitat with Screen Lid	Water Bowl	Under Tank Heater
Substrate	Incandescent Light or Ceramic Heater	Misting Bottle
Hiding Area & Driftwood	Thermometer & Humidity Gauge	Book about Boas & Pythons

Health

Because snakes are potential carriers of Salmonella and infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your snakes and or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

You should consult with an exotic animal veterinarian if you observe any of the following conditions.

- Dermatitis Blisters - Rapid shedding caused by an unclean habitat or one that is too cold or damp. Clean the cage and lower humidity.
- Respiratory Disease - Labored breathing. Mucus in mouth or nostrils. Can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp. Keep snake warm and dry.
- Stomatitis - White, cheesy substance in the mouth; loss of teeth and appetite. If untreated, can be fatal.
- Ticks and Mites - Parasites on skin, can transmit disease.

For information regarding snakes and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets>

NOTE: The information contained in this document is for general reference only. Please consult a veterinarian for medical advice and concerns.

Sources: *Keeping and Breeding Snakes* by Chris Mattison
The Manual of Lizards and Snakes by Marc Staniszewski
The Proper Care of Snakes by Armin Geus