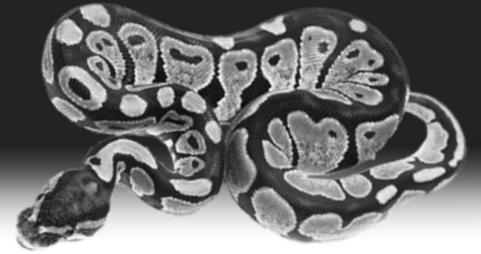




BALL PYTHON

Care Guide



ENCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

Enclosures should be more focused on ground space than total cubic feet. Ball pythons don't care how tall the space is, they are almost always on the ground. Make sure they have enough space to spread out. Ball pythons spend a lot of time in hides, so have at least one decent sized hiding spot, and plenty of cover. They also need access to fresh water. They can be sneaky! Make sure the lid and/or doors are secure.

TEMPERATURE

Ball pythons want it warm, not hot. This can be accomplished by over tank heaters (like ceramic heat emitters or non-white lights) or under tank heat pads installed on the OUTSIDE of the tank. Make sure the snake can't touch a heater directly, or burns can happen. Aim for about 85°F, but some variation is fine. The heat needs to be on at all times, so white lights are not a good idea.

HUMIDITY

Damp and moist are good! Sopping wet or desert dry are not. Ball pythons come from humid, tropical forests, so they like it muggy. The best way to monitor them is to watch their shed. If it comes off like a sock, that's perfect. If it comes off in flakey chunks, it's too dry. Don't allow for standing water or soaked substrate. If it is too wet, it can lead to a respiratory infection. Coconut Coir substrate is great for holding humidity around 50-60%.

BEHAVIOR BASICS

Ball pythons are great beginner snakes! They tend to be really docile, slower moving, and sturdy. As long as you don't mind their size (5ish feet) they are great pets. Ball pythons typically hide all day, and will explore their enclosures at night. They appreciate your warmth when held, but don't need daily handling to have a satisfying life. Ball pythons are ambush hunters, so they stay still most of the time, meaning they aren't likely to dodge out of young hands.

HANDLING

When getting your snake out of its enclosure, don't grab it by the head. Reach around its middle and slowly lift it up. The "Ball" in their name is for good reason, they typically are curled up like a ball when you first get them out. They need more physical support than other snakes. But once they hold on, they tend to get a good grip around things like arms and wrists. Make sure to keep them warm (no walks outside in the winter) and away from loud noises that may scare them.

FEEDING

Feeding should happen about every 7-10 days. You can feed younger snakes more frequently, but adults and seniors do not need to be fed as often. Unless told otherwise, your adopted snake will be eating frozen rodents that you will need to thaw. Put the rodent in warm water until it is thawed, then into a feeding container. This can be a Rubbermaid type tote or secure box. Then put the snake in the box with it. This prevents the snake from associating hands going into its enclosure as feeding time. No one likes getting bit on accident because their snake was hungry! Food should be about as wide around as the snake is around. Bigger is not better, when in doubt, feed a second item of a smaller size. Don't be surprised if your snake goes off its feed occasionally over the winter. Even with managed light cycles, many ball pythons stop eating regularly during the winter months. Don't panic! They should start eating again in a few weeks. It's not a problem unless you see them lose weight.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Ball pythons are pretty healthy. Make sure when they shed that they also lose the scale that goes over their eyes. If it didn't come off with the rest of their shed, soak them in some warm water. If they spend a lot of time in their water dish, check for mites. If they leave their mouth gapping open a lot, have wheezy breathing, or nasal discharge, they may have a respiratory infection, and should see a vet.