



Practice Limited to Birds, Reptiles and Exotics

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AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES
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Python and Boa Constrictor Care Sheet

All snakes are cold-blooded and require external sources of heat to maintain their body temperature at a healthy status. In their natural environment, most types of constrictors bask in the sun on rocks or tree branches to absorb the sun's rays. In the wild, both types of constrictors consume a wide variety of small animal prey, from small rodents and rabbits to birds and even other snakes.

Adult Ball Pythons can attain a length of 4-6 feet and adult Red-Tail Boa Constrictors can grow to be 12 feet. Reticulated Pythons and Burmese Pythons, both illegal to own as pets in Louisiana can reach lengths of 16 feet. The American Federation of Herpeticulturists recommends having two people present when handling boa constrictors and pythons over 8 feet in length.

HOUSING: Cages should be built with a snap on top or a hinged top with a latching mechanism. The cage should be easy to maintain and the bedding should be easy to clean. Items recommended for bedding are; pine shavings, aspen bedding, newspaper, or artificial carpet. Branches and rocks should be used for basking areas.

TEMPERATURE: The cage or enclosure should be kept at a temperature of 80-85F, during the day. Nighttime temperatures should not drop below 70F. Heating systems recommended for housing snakes are:

1. Reptile heating pads or standard heating pads placed beneath the cage. For large snakes housed in a room, large acrylic heating units with a rheostat can be used.
2. Incandescent light bulbs or spotlights can be used to provide radiant heat. ****CAUTION SHOULD BE EXERCISED SO AS NOT TO LET YOUR SNAKE CURL AROUND THE LIGHT FIXTURE. THEY CAN BURN THEMSELVES VERY EASILY.****
3. Space heaters can be used for large enclosures. ****AGAIN CAUTION IS URGED****
4. Hot rock are not recommended as the main source of heat!!

HUMIDITY: Water should always be available in the cage or enclosure. The use of spray bottles and body baths will help add moisture to the snake's skin, which will help during shedding.

DIET

Small rodents procured from pet shops or breeders are good sources of quality food. Care should be taken so as not to get too big of a meal, intestinal impactions can occur. It is not recommended to leave the prey alive in the cage over TWO HOURS, bite wounds can be very harmful to your snake.

1. Baby snakes – feed one or two 4-5 day old pinkie mice. Food should be offered every 4-5 days.
2. Juvenile snakes (3-6 feet) – feed one to two medium size rats every 5-7 days.
3. Adult snakes (6-10 feet) – feed one to three rats or one rabbit every 5-7 days.

VETERINARY EXAMINATION

It is highly recommended to have all newly acquired pets checked by a qualified reptile knowledgeable veterinarian. All snakes should be checked yearly for internal and external parasites.

We strongly recommend annual health examinations on all exotics!

