

Ball Python “Python regius”

Ball pythons are the perfect snakes for anyone who likes the look of a python without the normally massive size. Ball pythons average only 4 feet in size, unlike their larger python cousins that make it up well over 20 feet in some cases! This makes them a great pet as they will always be easy to handle and will never need anything larger than a mouse to eat.

General Diet:

Snakes are carnivores, which means they eat meat. Ball pythons can eat mice, and some willingly will eat frozen mice that are available commercially. The prey size should be the correct size for the snake and never too big.

Vitamins/Supplements:

Reptiles need to have a vitamin/mineral supplement with calcium and phosphorous. This supplement should be sprinkled on the adult's food items at every second to third feeding and sometimes more often with very young reptiles. We will be glad to explain how often to feed and give supplements to your new pet.

Important Food Tips:

It is best to feed your snake in a place that is not its normal home, such as a large, deep tray. That way the snake will not associate its home as a place that it could be fed. If frozen food is used, it must be thawed out first and at room temperature before it is fed.

Never feed a snake anything cold. If live food is fed, watch the snake and prey item carefully. If the snake doesn't seem hungry, take the prey item away, as they will sometimes hurt the snake. You can also put the item in tongs and tease the snake with the prey to see if it wants to eat. Never hold the prey item with your fingers! If it still does not want to eat try later, in a day or so, and be sure the habitat is not too cold. Ball pythons can be tricky eaters, and will sometimes stop eating for short periods of time. This is normal if they are healthy otherwise.

Housing:

Ball pythons stay small, so a 20-30 gallon tank will work well. A full cover should be used on top of a tank with clamps. The habitat will also need two types of lighting systems, which may be built into the cover. One type of lighting has a reptile fluorescent bulb that preferably gives off full spectrum light including UVA and UVB. The UVB is considered important for these snakes so they can absorb calcium properly and stay healthy.

The second light system is for heat. Reptiles are ectotherms, which means they get their heat from an outside source, unlike humans. Different areas of the habitat should be at different temperatures, so reptiles can move around to heat up or cool off. Boas are comfortable with a daytime temperature in their habitat of 84-88 degrees, and a nighttime temperature of 70-75. Use a ceramic reflector or daylight heat bulb in a heat lamp during the day to keep the temperature up in their habitat. Do not use hot rocks with Ball pythons.

Ball pythons like high humidity, so mist the habitat daily if needed. Shallow water containers help keep humidity up, and pythons like to bathe sometimes, so a water bowl or tray large enough for them to get in and out of easily should be offered constantly. Some low branches that they may climb can be used in the habitat.

Do not use any branches from outside, or you might be introducing pesticides or diseases. Use the appropriate reptile litter or substrate on the bottom. Pythons like to have a place to hide so provide some sort of cave or hiding spot.

Sanitation/General Care:

Change the water as needed, usually three to five times a week. The litter or substrate used on the bottom should be cleaned as often as needed, and this will depend on habitat size and your pet's size.

General Maintenance:

Mist the habitat once daily if needed, depending on how dry the air is in your area and time of year. Reptiles will shed their skin periodically. Mist them lightly at these times to help them shed the skin more easily, and be sure a large water container is available. Be sure the habitat is always at the right temperature. Change the reptile full spectrum light as often as recommended by the manufacturer, usually every six months to a year. Although the bulb may still be working, it will lose its potency over a certain period of time.

Health Care:

Pythons are generally very hardy and healthy when kept in the right conditions. Have them checked by a reptile veterinarian only if needed due to sickness or injury. If they stop eating for a long period of time, as Ball pythons might do, have them checked out to be sure there are no health concerns.

Special Section - Handling Precaution:

Reptiles can carry one disease that can be transmitted to people called salmonellosis. Although it is rare for a reptile to carry this disease, it is always important to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after you have handled your pet or anything in your pet's cage. Keep your pet out of the kitchen area and do not allow very small children to handle any reptiles.

Supplies checklist:

Fluorescent light with reptile UVB bulb	Fish tank with full hood
Heat lamp with heat emitter or daylight heat bulb	Large water dish or tray
2nd heat lamp with lower wattage emitter or night bulb	Reptile litter or other substrate
Branches or other decorations for climbing and hiding	Vitamin/mineral supplement
Books about Ball Pythons	

