



Ball (Royal) Python

Python regius

Ball Pythons are great for beginners as they are relatively easy snakes to care for. They are named for their habit of curling themselves up into a ball when nervous. Mostly active at night, they are sometimes active during the day. Ball Pythons get nowhere near the size of many other pythons and are far therefore much more manageable for children. With that said, NEVER let a child interact with your snake unsupervised. Ball pythons can be found in many color and pattern variations, or "morphs", some of which sell for thousands of dollars.

- Average Size:** 4 - 5 ft in length (*Ball pythons are recommended for novice keepers.*)
- Life Span:** 25 + years with proper care.
- Diet:** Thawed, appropriate sized frozen rodents, warmed to room temperature.
- Feeding:** Feed most adult snakes every two weeks, or as needed; juveniles once or twice a week. Feed in a separate enclosure so that your snake does not associate your hand or the habitat being opened with feeding or use the tap training technique. Ball Pythons can be finicky eaters so be patient when feeding. **If feeding your snake live prey, never leave them unattended. Live prey can injure the snake, sometimes fatally.**
- Housing:**
- Size:** Appropriate size and shape habitat to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise.
 - Substrate:** Aspen shavings, mulch-type commercial material; unbleached paper towels, newspaper.
 - Habitat:** Adults require a long & large enclosure, a minimum of half the body length of the snake.
 - Temperature:** Temperature gradient should be 78 - 95F; recommend radiant heat; use an incandescent light or ceramic heat emitter and heat pad or tape as Ball Pythons require belly heat. (Always use a thermostat with heat tape. NEVER use a heat rock. Humidity should be between 60-70%.
 - Lighting:** Snakes need a photo period light cycle; provide 8-12 hours of light daily; do not leave white light on at all times; to view snakes at night, use a black or infrared light.
 - Water:** Provide a water bowl of chlorine-free water large enough for the snake to soak in.
- Habitat Care:** Clean out water dish and replace water dish daily; remove any feces daily, or food if not eaten. Thoroughly clean the tank at least once a week: set snake aside in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a reptile habitat cleaner or 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all smell if bleach if used; dry the tank and furnishings; add clean substrate.
- Behavior:** As snake gets ready to shed, eyes will turn milky blue over the course of a few days and body color will start to dull and develop a whitish sheen. Will remain quiet in the hiding area or coiled up for long periods of time; should display an alert demeanor when disturbed. Will search habitat when hungry. Learn to read your snakes moods.
- Hygiene:** Snakes will regularly shed their skin; if old pieces of skin remain after shedding, mist the snake and gently rub off the old skin. Always wash your hands before and after handling your snake or habitat contents to help prevent Salmonella and other diseases.
- Healthy Signs:** Active & alert, clear eyes, healthy skin, eats regularly, regular shedding of skin, shed skin in one complete piece.
- Health Issues:**
- Ticks & Mites:** Parasites on skin, can transmit diseases.
Proposed Action: Thoroughly clean the enclosure, use a safe reptile mite treatment or see veterinarian.
 - Dermatitis:** Blisters; rapid shedding cause by an unclean habitat or one that is too cold or damp.
Proposed Action: Clean the habitat and lower humidity. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
 - Respiratory Disease:** Labored breathing, mucus in mouth/nostrils, caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.
Proposed Action: Keep snake warm and dry. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
 - Stomatitis:** White, cheesy substance in the mouth; loss of teeth and appetite.
Proposed Action: If left untreated, can be fatal. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
- Red Flags:** Unusually frequent or infrequent shedding, Lethargic or reluctant to eat; weight loss, abnormal feces, difficulty shedding, vomiting, bumps or spots on skin, labored breathing, white, cheesy substance in mouth.
- Note:** *The information on our care sheets was collected from various sources as well as our own experiences. These care sheets are guidelines only, not a substitute for veterinary care and should not be used as such. If you need additional information, there are also multiple reptile forums online. If ever in doubt, always consult your exotic reptile veterinarian.*