

Children's, Stimson's, Spotted, Pygmy python care

Antaresia is a genus that includes a few species of relatively small non-venomous pythons native to Australia. They are generally quite gentle snakes, but some may be a little irritable. With appropriate care, they can live a healthy life for more than 20 years.

Enclosure

- Enclosure size varies with size of the python; at a minimum, the enclosure should be 0.8 long x 0.4m high x 0.5m wide
- Enclosure should be constructed of materials that retain heat and are easy to clean (plastic/acrylic and wood). Glass enclosures are not ideal as they do not retain heat well.
- Be mindful of the python's ability to squeeze through small spaces and escape! DO NOT use sticky tape or duct tape to reinforce the enclosure. Pythons have a tendency to get stuck, inflicting serious skin injuries to themselves in the process.
- Newspaper or paper towels are the most hygienic and easy to clean substrates, and this limits any sand ingestion. These pythons like to burrow, so providing recycled paper-based kitty litter is also suitable.
- Clean the enclosure once weekly and spot clean as required
- Provide climbing and hiding furniture (branches, rocks, hide box) for enrichment, activity and improved thermoregulation
- Provide a water bowl large enough for the python to bathe in
- The humidity requirements depend on the species

Temperature

- Monitor the temperature with at least 2 digital thermometers placed at the level of the python. The preferred temperature depends on the species.
- Basking spot: 32-35C provided with a thermostatically-controlled globe
- Cool end: 24-27C
- Night temp: 21C and above. Use a heat mat underneath the enclosure if required. Do not use hot rocks

Lighting

- Recommended light cycle is 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness
- Although nocturnal, a UV light should be provided for pythons for general well-being and to allow normal behaviours to occur. UV globes should be placed in the same position as the heat lamp, within a distance recommended by the manufacturer, and not filtered by glass. Replace the globe at least every 6 months (even if the globe still appears to be working).
- No artificial UV globe is a replacement for natural sunshine. Provide your python with regular access to natural unfiltered sunshine. Make sure shade is provided to prevent overheating.

Diet

- Pythons are completely carnivorous
- Suitable food items are rodents or birds. Food items must be dead; it is illegal and inhumane to feed live prey.
- Juveniles eat once a week, adults eat every 2-3 weeks. Feed 10% body weight.
- The food items can be occasionally supplemented with a multivitamin

Handling

- Avoid overhandling as this can be stressful
- Avoid handling your python after a meal or during shedding
- When handling your python, support its whole body to prevent injury

Health care

- Newly acquired pythons should be quarantined and examined by a vet, which may include parasite testing and blood tests. Annual check-ups are recommended thereafter, especially if they are used for breeding
- Weigh your python regularly and record the weight
- Wash your hands after handling your python and between handling of different reptiles