



Ball Python Care Sheet

Ball Pythons have become a popular pet in the reptile community. They are a snake that can get big enough to be “impressive” but not overwhelming, they come in a large variety colors and patterns and are very easy to come by. Ball Pythons originate from Africa and have become easily obtainable as captive bred. They can get up to 5ft in length, males are generally smaller and thinner than females. They aren’t flighty snakes like most colubrids (corn snakes, milk snakes, king snakes) and will curl up into a ball (hence the name) when they are stressed.

Housing:

As mentioned above, they can get up to 5ft in length, so a large enough enclosure is necessary. Minimum rule of thumb is you want your snake to be able to make an L along their enclosure, which means they should be able to stretch the length and width of their cage without being compressed.

For an adult the minimum recommendation is 4ftx2ftx2ft front opening enclosure.

For juveniles a 40 gallon preferably front opening enclosure.

Best substrates to use is something that will hold humidity. Cocomat or reptisoil are good options. A good blend of different substrates is always a good option. Doing a ratio of reptisoil, wood chips and a little bit of sand will make a very naturalistic substrate. Having a deep amount of bedding will help make your snake more comfortable. These guys aren’t diggers like corn snakes or hognoses but with a thick layer of substrate will give you the opportunity to create different micro-climates within the cage. You can bury hides into the substrate to mimic burrow, pile some higher up in some corners to be closer to heating sources. It will also create more enrichment for your snake.

Lighting is a very controversial topic for most snakes and nocturnal reptiles. Just like in nature, we want a day and night cycle, 12 hours day and 12 night. Using a heat lamp will help replicate that. We prefer over tank heating for reptiles for many reasons, it will give your reptile a more natural environment, under tank heaters can crack glass tanks or burn pets if unregulated, and it give your reptile to come out and bask so you can visualize them without disturbing them in their hides. Just like any other reptile we want a gradient from hot to cool in their cage.

Basking spots (directly under the heat lamp): 95-100° F

Warm side (not directly under heat lamp): 85-90°F

Cool Side (opposite side of heat lamp): 75-80°F

Nighttime drops shouldn’t go below 70°F

If your house gets below 70°F, then it is best recommended to use something like a ceramic heat emitter to help keep thing in range for your snake. Best way to measure heating is with a thermometer gun and using probe sensors regulating lights.

UV is the biggest controversy about nocturnal reptiles. Yes, nocturnal reptiles aren’t basking out in the sun all day like diurnal reptiles but a lot of them are still coming in contact with it out in the wild. Hiding under bushes or leaf litter can still expose them. UV in low wattage is proven to have benefits to their health, so there is no harm adding on a UV light such as Arcadia D3 forest bulb or their shadeDweller bulb.

As mentioned above with substrate. Ball pythons like it humid. Humidity ranging from 45-75%. Having a fogger or misting system will help provide adequate humidity levels, especially when living somewhere more arid.

Decor is also another big factor in keeping ball pythons happy. Since they can be shy, having multiple hides and foliage that they can hide under and various branches and ledges to climb on. A bioactive set up with live plants can be nice but as the snake matures there is always the risk of them trampling over all the plants while they explore.

Feeding:

Snakes are carnivorous, meaning that they eat meat. If feeding little mice and rats aren’t your thing then a snake may not be the pet for you. Snakes take whole prey items such as mice, rats, quail, and chicks. Rule of thumb for size of prey is you don’t want the prey item to be over 1.5x the widest point of the snake and should weigh about 10% of its body weight; example 400g snake can eat a 40g prey item.

Feeding schedules can be confusing. The younger the animal the more frequent we feed.

Babies should be fed every 5-7 days

Juveniles every 7-14 days

Small adults every 14-21 days

Large adults every 30-60 days

Ball pythons should always have a large enough water bowl to soak their entire body in and the water should be cleaned daily.