Boa Constrictor Care Sheet



Comprehensive Guide to the Husbandry of Boa Constrictors

# Housing

## *Enclosure Size*

* Hatchlings and juveniles (up to 3 feet): A 40-gallon enclosure is sufficient.
* Subadults (3-6 feet): A 4'x2'x2' enclosure is recommended.
* Adults (6-10 feet): Minimum enclosure size of 6'x2'x2', though larger is always better.

Boa constrictors appreciate both horizontal and vertical space, particularly younger snakes. Secure lids and doors are essential, as boas are strong and adept escape artists.

## *Substrate*

Popular substrate options include:

* Aspen bedding
* Cypress mulch
* Coconut husk fiber
* Reptisoil
* Paper towels or newspaper (for quarantine or ease of cleaning)

Avoid pine or cedar shavings, as aromatic oils can cause respiratory problems. The substrate should be absorbent, promote burrowing, and maintain humidity without molding.

## *Decor and Hides*

Provide at least two hides—one on the warm side and one on the cool side of the enclosure. Branches, sturdy driftwood, and vines help mimic their natural environment and offer climbing opportunities. Add artificial or live plants for enrichment and security.

## *Cleaning*

Spot-clean daily to remove feces and uneaten food. Replace substrate entirely every 3-4 moths, or sooner if soiled. Disinfect enclosure and furnishings with a reptile-safe solution such as diluted bleach, diluted vinegar, ammonia free glass cleaner, or reptile brand cleaners.

# Temperature & Heating

Boa constrictors require a thermal gradient to regulate their body temperature.

* Warm side (basking area): 88–92°F
* Cool side: 78–82°F
* Night drop: Temperatures can fall a few degrees at night but should not dip below 70°F, try to keep enclosure warmer over night for babies because they don’t do well with extreme temperature fluctuations.

Use heat mats, ceramic heat emitters, or radiant heat panels regulated by thermostats. Avoid hot rocks, which can cause burns. Always monitor temperatures with reliable digital thermometers.

# Humidity & Water

Relative humidity should be maintained between 50–70%. Mist the enclosure as needed and provide a large, sturdy water bowl for soaking and drinking. During shedding, increasing humidity to the upper range helps ensure a clean shed. Poor humidity management can lead to respiratory infections and incomplete sheds. Sphagnum moss can be moistened and added to the hide on the warm side of the enclosure to increase humidity.

# Diet & Feeding

Prey items should be as wide as the thickest part of the snake's body.

* Hatchlings/Juveniles: Mice or rat pups every 7–10 days
* Subadults: Appropriately sized rats every 10–14 days
* Adults: Large rats or rabbits every 2–4 weeks, depending on size and activity

Do not overfeed; boas are prone to obesity in captivity.

# Handling

Boa constrictors are generally calm and tolerate gentle handling well. Always support the body and avoid sudden movements. Limit handling for new arrivals for at least a week to reduce stress, and never handle after feeding or during shedding. Wash your hands before and after handling to prevent disease transmission.

# Health & Common Issues

Regular monitoring for signs of illness is vital:

* Respiratory infections: Wheezing, bubbly saliva, open-mouth breathing
* Mouth rot: Swollen, discolored mouth tissue, pus
* Parasites: Mites, ticks, or unusual feces
* Inclusion body disease (IBD): Neurological symptoms, regurgitation, stargazing

Consult a qualified reptile veterinarian for any concerns. Regular health checks, quarantine for new arrivals, and good hygiene practices are key to preventing disease.

**Vet Care:** If you notice your boa is lethargic, not eating for excessive periods of time, losing weight, struggling to move or breathe, consider reaching out to any of the following vets:

* Exotic Bird Hospital on Beach Blvd. (904) 256-0043
* Riverside Animal Hospital Downtown (904) 388-3494
* Birch Island Veterinary Center on Philips Hwy. (904) 717-6840
* Forever Vets Animal Hospital on Bartram Market Dr. (904) 490-8228