BALL PYTHON
CARE GUIDE

THE NEW BEGINNING WAY

Ball Pythons
New Beginning Animal Sanctuary

Ball Python Care Guide

Ball pythons are a popular choice for reptile enthusiasts due to their manageable size, docile nature, and varied colour patterns. Proper care is essential to ensure they thrive in captivity. Here is a comprehensive guide to caring for ball pythons:

1. Enclosure

- **Size**: An adult ball python will require a 40-gallon tank, at minimum. Hatchlings can be kept in smaller enclosures, but they will need to be upgraded as they grow.
- **Material**: Glass terrariums or plastic enclosures with secure lids are ideal, as they retain humidity well and prevent escapes.
- **Substrate**: Choose a substrate that holds humidity, such as coconut fiber, cypress mulch, or aspen shavings. Avoid pine or cedar as they can be harmful.

2. Temperature and Heating

- **Temperature Gradient**: Provide a gradient with a warm side at 88-92°F and a cool side at 76-80°F. This allows your python to regulate its body temperature.
- **Heat Sources**: Use under-tank heaters or heat lamps to maintain the required temperatures. Avoid heat rocks as they can cause burns.
- **Night-time Temperatures**: Temperatures can drop to 72-78°F at night, but ensure it does not go lower.

3. Humidity

- **Level**: Maintain humidity levels between 50-60%. During shedding, increase humidity to 60-70%.
- **Methods**: Use a hygrometer to monitor levels and mist the enclosure as needed. You can also add a water dish large enough for the snake to soak in.

4. Lighting

- **UVB Lighting**: Ball pythons do not require UVB lighting, but a light cycle of 12 hours on and 12 hours off can help mimic their natural environment.
- **Additional Lighting**: If using bulbs for heat, ensure they are not too bright as ball pythons are nocturnal and prefer dim light.

5. Feeding

- **Diet**: Feed appropriately-sized rodents, such as mice or rats. Prey should be no larger than the widest part of the snake's body.
- **Frequency**: Hatchlings eat every 5-7 days, while adults can be fed every 1-2 weeks.
- **Frozen vs. Live**: It's safer to offer pre-killed frozen/thawed prey to prevent injury to your snake.

6. Handling and Temperament

- **Handling**: Handle your ball python regularly to maintain its docile nature, but avoid handling for 48 hours after feeding.
- **Signs of Stress**: Look for signs such as hissing, curling into a ball, or refusal to eat, and adjust handling or enclosure conditions accordingly.

7. Health and Wellness

- **Shedding**: Ensure humidity is adequate, as improper humidity can lead to incomplete sheds.
- **Common Health Issues**: Be aware of issues such as respiratory infections, mites, and mouth rot. Consult a reptile veterinarian if any signs of illness appear.

By following these guidelines, you can provide a safe and healthy environment for your ball python, ensuring a long and enriching companionship.

Why Ball Pythons Are Called Royal Pythons in the United Kingdom

Ball pythons, scientifically known as *Python regius,* are commonly referred to as "royal pythons" in the United Kingdom. The name "royal python" is believed to have historical and

cultural origins that contribute to its usage. Here are some reasons why they have this regal name:

Historical Association

The term "royal python" is said to originate from the belief that ancient African royalty, including Cleopatra, adorned themselves with these snakes as jewellery. Their calm demeanour and manageable size made them suitable for such purposes, symbolizing luxury and prestige.

Etymology

The scientific name *Python regius* translates to "royal python," with "regius" being Latin for "king" or "royal." This nomenclature reflects the snake's esteemed status and elegant appearance.

Cultural Influence

In various African cultures, these pythons have been associated with royalty and are often considered sacred. This cultural reverence may have influenced the adoption of the term "royal python" to honour their esteemed place in history.

In summary, the name "royal python" reflects the snake's historical ties to nobility, its scientific classification, and its cultural significance, which together highlight the special regard in which this species is held.

Enclosure

Creating a comfortable and safe environment for your ball python is crucial for its health and well-being. Here are some key considerations for setting up an ideal enclosure:

1. Size of the Enclosure

Ball pythons require an enclosure that allows them to move around freely. A minimum size for an adult ball python should be a 40-gallon tank. However, larger is often better, as it allows for more enrichment and exploration opportunities.

2. Temperature and Heating

Ball pythons are ectothermic, meaning they need external heat sources to regulate their body temperature. The enclosure should have a temperature gradient:

- **Warm Side: 88-92°F (31-33°C)**
- **Cool Side: 78-80°F (25-27°C)**
- **Night Temperature: Should not drop below 75°F (24°C)**

Use a heat lamp or an under-tank heater to maintain these temperatures.

3. Humidity Levels

Ball pythons require a humidity level of 50-60%. This can be achieved by misting the enclosure regularly and using a substrate that retains moisture, like coconut husk or cypress mulch.

4. Substrate

Choose a substrate that is safe and easy to clean. Options include:

- **Aspen shavings**
- **Coconut husk**
- **Cypress mulch**

Avoid cedar and pine shavings as they can be toxic to reptiles.

5. Hides and Enrichment

Provide at least two hides in the enclosure—one on the warm side and one on the cool side. This gives your ball python a sense of security and comfort. You can also add branches or climbing structures for enrichment.

6. Water Bowl

Include a water bowl large enough for your ball python to soak in. Ensure the water is clean and changed regularly to maintain hygiene.

7. Lighting

While ball pythons do not require UVB lighting, providing a day/night cycle with a regular light can help regulate their natural rhythms.

8. Security

Make sure the enclosure is secure, as ball pythons are adept escape artists. Use a well-fitted lid with locks to prevent any escapes.

By following these guidelines, you can create a healthy and stimulating environment for your ball python, ensuring it thrives in its new home.

Temperature and Heating

Ball pythons, known for their docile nature and beautiful patterns, require specific care to thrive in captivity. One of the most critical aspects of their care is maintaining the right temperature and heating conditions. This ensures their health, well-being, and natural behaviour.

Ideal Temperature Range

Ball pythons are native to the warm regions of Africa, so they require a warm environment to mimic their natural habitat. The ideal temperature range for a ball python enclosure is as follows:

- Basking Spot: 88°F to 92°F (31°C to 33°C)
- Ambient Temperature: 78°F to 80°F (25°C to 27°C)
- Night-time Temperature: 75°F to 78°F (24°C to 25°C)

Heating Methods

To achieve these temperatures, several heating methods can be employed. It's essential to choose the right one based on the specific needs of your setup and the comfort of your snake.

1. Under Tank Heaters (UTH)

Under tank heaters are a popular choice for ball python enclosures. These heat pads attach to the bottom of the tank and provide a consistent source of warmth. It's crucial to use a thermostat with UTHs to regulate the temperature and prevent overheating.

2. Heat Lamps

Heat lamps can be used to create a basking spot, offering a gradient of temperatures within the enclosure. Ceramic heat emitters or infrared bulbs are preferred, as they provide heat without emitting light, which is less disruptive for nocturnal animals like ball pythons.

3. Radiant Heat Panels

Radiant heat panels are an efficient and safe option, as they distribute heat evenly throughout the enclosure without the risk of burns. They are particularly useful in larger setups or when ambient room temperatures are cooler.

Monitoring and Safety

Regularly monitoring the temperature within the enclosure is vital. Use digital thermometers to check both the basking spot and ambient temperatures. Additionally, ensure that the heat sources are safely secured and cannot come into direct contact with the snake, which could lead to burns.

Conclusion

Providing the right temperature and heating conditions is essential for the health and well-being of ball pythons. By carefully setting up and maintaining their habitat, you can ensure that your ball python remains healthy and active. Remember to regularly check and adjust the temperatures as needed, and always prioritize your pet's safety and comfort.

Humidity

Proper humidity is crucial for maintaining the health and well-being of ball pythons. These reptiles originate from the savannas and forests of West and Central Africa, where the climate is warm and humid. Here are some key points to consider when managing humidity for ball pythons:

Optimal Humidity Levels

1. **Ideal Range: The ideal humidity range for ball pythons is between 50% and 60%. This range helps in maintaining their skin health and aids in proper shedding.**
2. **Shedding: During the shedding process, humidity levels can be increased to around 65% to 70% to facilitate smooth skin removal. This can be achieved by misting the enclosure or providing a humid hide.**
3. **Measuring Humidity: It is important to regularly monitor the humidity levels in the enclosure using a hygrometer. Placing the hygrometer at snake level will provide the most accurate reading.**

Maintaining Humidity

- **Substrate: Use substrates that retain moisture well, such as coconut fiber, cypress mulch, or sphagnum moss. These materials can help maintain proper humidity levels.**
- **Water Dish: Ensure a large water dish is present in the enclosure. The evaporation from the dish contributes to the overall humidity.**
- **Misting: Regular misting can help raise humidity levels. Be cautious not to over-mist, as excessive moisture can lead to respiratory issues.**
- **Humid Hide: Providing a hide with damp sphagnum moss can offer a humid microenvironment for the python to retreat to, ensuring it has access to higher humidity when needed.**

Potential Issues

1. **Too Low Humidity: If the humidity is consistently below 50%, ball pythons may experience difficulty shedding, leading to retained eye caps or incomplete sheds.**
2. **Too High Humidity: Constantly high humidity levels (above 70%) can encourage the growth of mold and bacteria, leading to respiratory infections.**

By maintaining the appropriate humidity levels, ball python owners can ensure their pet's health and comfort, ultimately creating a thriving environment that mimics their natural habitat.

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<u>Lighting</u>

Ball pythons, being nocturnal creatures, do not require extensive lighting like some other reptiles. However, providing appropriate lighting can help regulate their day-night cycle and support their overall health. Here's a guide on how to properly light your ball python's habitat:

1. Natural Day-Night Cycle

Ball pythons benefit from a natural day-night cycle. This means providing around 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness, simulating their natural environment.

2. Types of Lighting

- Ambient Light: Use a low-wattage bulb or ambient room light to simulate daylight. Avoid bright lights that could stress your snake.
- UVB Lighting: While not strictly necessary for ball pythons, some owners opt to include a low-level UVB light to mimic natural sunlight. This can promote a sense of normalcy and contribute to the snake's well-being.

3. Heat Lamps

- Basking Spot: Provide a basking spot with a heat lamp if your ambient temperature is not sufficient. Ensure the basking spot reaches appropriate temperatures (around 88-92°F or 31-33°C).
- Nighttime Heating: Use a ceramic heat emitter or under-tank heater if additional warmth is needed at night without disrupting the darkness your python needs.

4. Safety Precautions

- Avoid Direct Contact: Ensure that your ball python cannot come into direct contact with the heat source to prevent burns. Use a lamp guard or place lights outside the enclosure.
- Monitor Temperatures: Always use a thermostat to regulate temperatures and prevent overheating.

By following these guidelines, you can create a comfortable and safe environment for your ball python, ensuring its health and well-being.

Feeding

Proper feeding is crucial for the health and well-being of your ball python. Below is a guide to help ensure your snake receives the nutrition it needs.

What to Feed

Ball pythons are carnivorous reptiles that primarily eat rodents. The most common prey items include:

- **Mice:** Appropriate for younger or smaller ball pythons.
- **Rats:** Suitable for adult or larger pythons.
- **Other Rodents:** Options like gerbils or hamsters can be occasional treats.

Feeding Frequency

1. **Hatchlings and Juveniles:** Feed every 5-7 days.
2. **Subadults:** Feed every 7-10 days.
3. **Adults:** Feed every 10-14 days.

Prey Size

The size of the prey should be proportionate to the size of your ball python. A general rule is to offer prey that is about the same width as the widest part of the snake's body.

Feeding Tips

- **Thaw Frozen Prey:** If using frozen prey, ensure it is fully thawed and warmed to around the snake's body temperature before feeding.
- **Use Feeding Tongs:** To prevent accidental bites, use tongs to offer the prey.

- **Observe Feeding Behaviour:** Allow your python to strike and constrict its prey naturally. Do not handle your snake immediately after feeding to avoid stress or regurgitation.

Signs of Feeding Issues

- **Refusal to Eat:** It is not uncommon for ball pythons to refuse food, especially during shedding or breeding season. Ensure the environment is correct and consult a vet if refusals are prolonged.
- **Regurgitation:** If your snake regurgitates, check for stress factors or improper feeding practices.

Monitoring Health

Regularly monitor your ball python's weight and overall condition to ensure they are thriving on their feeding schedule. Adjust as needed based on their growth and activity levels.

By following these guidelines, you can help maintain the health and happiness of your ball python through proper feeding practices.

Handling and Temperament

Ball pythons are among the most popular pet snakes due to their manageable size and generally docile nature. Understanding how to handle them properly and recognizing aspects of their temperament can enhance your experience as a snake owner.

Handling Tips

1. **Approach Calmly:** When handling a ball python, approach them calmly and confidently. Sudden movements can startle them and cause stress.
2. **Support the Body:** Always support the snake's body fully. Use both hands to gently lift them, providing support along their entire length.
3. **Be Gentle:** Avoid squeezing or gripping too tightly. Ball pythons are delicate creatures, and excessive pressure can harm them.
4. **Regular Handling:** Handle your ball python regularly to help them get accustomed to human interaction, but limit sessions to once a day to avoid stress.
5. **Watch for Signs of Stress:** If your snake becomes agitated, starts to hiss, or tries to retreat, it's best to put them back in their enclosure and try again later.

Temperament Characteristics

- **Docile Nature:** Ball pythons are known for their gentle and docile nature, making them ideal for first-time snake owners.
- **Shy and Timid:** They can be quite shy and may ball up when feeling threatened, hence the name "ball python."
- **Nocturnal Behaviour:** Being nocturnal, they are more active during the night. Handle them during the day when they are less active for a more relaxed interaction.
- **Individual Differences:** Each snake has its own personality; some may be more outgoing, while others remain shy and reserved.

Understanding and respecting your ball python's temperament and handling them with care will ensure a healthy and stress-free relationship.

Health and Wellness

Ball pythons are popular pets known for their docile nature and manageable size, making them a great choice for both novice and experienced reptile enthusiasts. Ensuring the health and wellness of a ball python involves several key aspects.

1. Proper Housing

- Enclosure Size: A single adult ball python requires at least a 40-gallon tank. The enclosure should be secure, well-ventilated, and escape-proof.
- Substrate: Use substrates like aspen bedding or coconut husk, which are safe and mimic their natural environment.
- Decor and Hiding Spots: Provide multiple hiding spots, such as caves or logs, to help them feel secure. Climbing branches and foliage can also enrich their environment.

2. Temperature and Humidity Control

- Temperature: Maintain a gradient with a warm side around 88-92°F (31-33°C) and a cool side around 78-80°F (25-27°C). Use thermostatically controlled heat sources.
- Humidity: Keep humidity levels between 50-60%. During shedding, increase humidity to 60-70% to aid in the shedding process.

3. Feeding

- **Diet:** Ball pythons primarily eat rodents. Offer appropriately sized prey, such as mice or rats, every 1-2 weeks.
- **Feeding Method:** It's best to feed pre-killed prey to prevent injury to the snake. Use tongs to offer the prey to encourage natural hunting behavior.

4. Regular Health Checks

- **Observation:** Regularly observe your snake for signs of illness, such as lethargy, loss of appetite, or respiratory issues.
- **Shedding:** Ensure complete and healthy shedding. Retained skin or eye caps can indicate humidity issues or health problems.
- **Vet Visits:** Schedule regular check-ups with a reptile veterinarian to ensure your ball python is in good health.

MEDIVET
ALWAYS THERE

5. Clean Environment

- **Spot Cleaning:** Remove feces and uneaten food promptly to prevent bacteria build-up.
- **Deep Cleaning:** Every few weeks, clean the entire enclosure with a reptile-safe disinfectant.

6. Handling and Socialization

- **Handling:** Handle your ball python gently and regularly to help them become accustomed to human interaction.
- **Signs of Stress:** Be aware of stress signs, such as hissing or coiling tightly, and give your snake space when needed.

By focusing on these aspects, you can create a healthy and enriching environment for your ball python, ensuring it thrives under your care.

FEEDING LOG

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