



# Ball Python

*(Also known as royal python)*

*Python regius*

<b>Adult Size</b>	3 to 5 feet long	<b>Life Span 30 years or more</b>
<b>Male/Female Differences</b>	Adult female ball Pythons average 3 to 5 feet long, and adult male ball pythons average 2 to 3 feet in size. This is a species in which mature females are typically much larger than the males. A 5-foot ball python is considered big, although lengths of 6 feet or more have been reported	
<b>Compatibility</b>	Ball pythons are solitary creatures and should not be housed together, unless it is for breeding purposes.	
<b>Origin</b>	Central and western Africa	
<b>Climate</b>	Warm and tropical	
<b>Day Cycle</b>	Nocturnal species	
<b>Temperature</b>	Basking spot temperature of 88 to 96 degrees Ambient temperature of 78 to 80 degrees	
<b>Lighting</b>	Supplemental lighting is not necessary for ball pythons. Full spectrum lighting however increases appetite and emotional health if used on a 12/12 cycle, meaning 12 hours on and 12 hours off. Continuous bright, overhead lighting is stressful to snakes.	
<b>Humidity</b>	50%-60% 60%-70% during a shed cycle Providing the proper humidity required by your Ball python is important in maintaining proper sheds. Both excessive and inadequate humidity levels can lead to illness in the form of respiratory infections and a very damp environment easily lends itself to the growth of mold and fungus which can contribute bacterial or fungal infections, scale or belly rot. To dry of an environment leads to dehydration and inability of healthy sheds.	
<b>Habitat/Territory</b>	Ball Pythons typically make their homes in abandoned rodent burrows or termite mounds.	

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<b>Substrate/Bedding</b>	<p>Some viable options for substrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sterilized bark type chips</li> <li>• Aspen</li> <li>• Newspaper</li> <li>• Paper towels</li> <li>• Cage carpet</li> <li>• Cyprus mulch</li> <li>• Coconut husk</li> <li>• Keep damp moss in about 30% of your cage located on or near your snakes hiding spot.</li> <li>• Cage should be sprayed down once or twice day to maintain proper humidity levels</li> </ul> <p>Also be aware that less porous the substrate, the less likely the environment will develop mite infestations and ease of cleaning.</p>
<b>Hiding Place/Den</b>	<p>Ball pythons seek dark and secure places to spend most of their time and providing the right amount of hides is critical to the snake's sense of security. If the snake does not feel secure, it will stress and give you feeding problems. Provide a hide on both the warm side and the cool side of the enclosure. On the warmer side hiding place, provide damp moss so the snake can burrow within the warm humid environment.</p>
<b>Cage Type</b>	<p>Snakes are excellent escape artist and need to make sure that you have a secure, ventilated lid. Cage clips on both ends of the cage should keep your snake safe and secure. Juvenile ball pythons seem to do well in small enclosures that make them feel secure. A small snake in a big cage can become overwhelmed and stressed. Adult ball pythons do require a minimum of a 36-inch by 18-inch enclosure.</p>
<b>Diet</b>	<p>Feed your ball python an appropriately sized rodent weekly. "Appropriately sized" means prey items that are no bigger in circumference than the ball python at its largest circumference. Ball pythons can eat rats from the time they are young – starting off with rat pups or "crawlers" at first and moving up in size as they grow. How often to feed really depends on what size prey is being offered. If one chooses to offer the smaller size, a feeding schedule of every seven days works well. Slightly larger prey items can be fed every ten days. Excessively large prey items will cause the ball python to refuse food on its own for an extended and unpredictable length of time.</p>
<b>Supplements</b>	<p>If feeding healthy prey foods frequently enough, no supplements are necessary. At times a veterinarian could recommend supplements to offset health issues. Some experts recommend dipping the rump of a feeder prey with a calcium or vitamin powder.</p>

<b>Diet Precautions</b>	Do not handle your ball python for at least a day after feeding, as this can lead to regurgitation. Ball pythons can be fed frozen and defrosted rodents. Never leave a live rodent unattended with any snake, as they can injure the snake. If feeding live rodents, it is advised to pre-kill the prey first. Avoid feeding any snake during a shed. Snake's senses are clouded during a shed and eating prey will make the snake's skin stretch causing improper shedding.
<b>Feeding</b>	It is highly recommended to feed your ball python in a dedicated feeding cage. In an escape proof enclosure, place feeder prey in first then place the snake in the feeding container. Overtime the snake will associate the feeding container as time to have its meal. This method will prevent your snake from associating your hand as food which could lead to the snake striking your hand as you reach into the cage. Ball pythons can feed on mice their entire lives. It is better to convert them over to rats as soon as possible since this is a natural instinctual diet. Juveniles require feeding every four to five days, offer more than one feeder prey in case the python is extra hungry. Snakes are not known to over indulge. Adult pythons should be fed every seven to 10 days depending on the size of the rodent fed. Most snakes are ready to feed after a fecal. Pythons are usually sedentary if content, seeing a python moving around a cage usually indicates the snake is hungry and looking for food.
<b>Water Source</b>	Always have fresh, clean water available for your ball python. Check the water daily. Provide a container large enough for the ball python to crawl into and soak. Ball pythons enjoy a nice soak from time to time. Ensure that the water bowl is not too deep for juvenile animals – 1 inch or so will suffice. Snakes of many species will defecate in their water bowls from time to time, so be prepared to clean and disinfect the water bowl. The water bowl should be cleaned and disinfected on a weekly basis. Having a spare water bowl for such occasions can be handy, so that one may be used while the other is being cleaned.
<b>Grooming</b>	Once the eyes turn cloudy your snake is about to shed. Avoid handling any snake during a shedding cycle since this can cause stress to the snake and also cause improper sheds. During shedding periods a good method is to place damp terry cloth towel loosely covering the bottom of the cage. The python will crawl throughout the folds of the towel and will absorb the moisture while aiding in exfoliation.
<b>Shedding</b>	Depending on the age of your snake, it will shed its skin every 4 - 8 weeks depending on the age and health. During this time it is a good idea to pay special attention to your humidity levels – bumping them to 60%-70% to ensure there is enough moisture present to assist in the process. Given good husbandry practices and properly maintained humidity; your ball python should have no problems shedding successfully. Many folks believe “one-piece-sheds” to be a hallmark of good husbandry, this is sometimes heavily dependent on how the snake sheds and what items within the enclosure can be used to rub against. The sheds should be complete and without retained patches

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	and or eye-caps still covering the eyes. Partial/incomplete sheds are an indication of poor animal husbandry.
<b>Proper Handling</b>	Ball pythons are known to be very docile animals and are very comfortable with being handled. They might be a little shy at first but, goal is to establish trust between you and your snake. If you are keeping a ball python as a pet, regular handling (once or twice a week) is essential. Also remember that the less often you handle your snake, the less it will be used to being handled. Snakes can become defensive if handler won't sit still, is loud and or has strong odors/perfumes. While handling snakes do so in a quiet setting.
<b>Habitat Maintenance</b>	Make sure you spot clean the cage at least once a week. Do a thorough cleaning once a month. This entails removing all of the contents of the cage and disinfecting them with an appropriate cleansing solution. The substrate should also be completely changed once a month. Change immediately if the environment is too wet.
<b>Health Concerns</b>	Newly acclimated stressed ball pythons can become anorexic. Consult one of our staff members or a veterinarian on many different techniques to get your snake eating. Ball pythons are well-known for not eating at certain times throughout the year, particularly in the winter months. Be prepared for the possibility of your ball python going off feed, and keep an observant eye on the snake's overall condition and body weight. This is typically nothing to worry about with healthy, well-established pythons. If your ball python is healthy, continue your husbandry routine as usual, but keep the amount of handling to a minimum. Offer your ball python food every 5 to 7 days until it is interested in eating again, as the snake will eventually resume feeding normally. Snakes are usually genetically flawless if kept with proper husbandry. Hybrid color morphs are now available but may have inherited problems.

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