

Ball Python Care Sheet



Get to Know Ball Pythons

Difficulty of care:

Beginner

Average lifespan:

Up to 30 years with proper care

Average adult size:

4-5 feet long

Diet:

Carnivore

Minimum habitat size:

10-20 gallons for juveniles;

40+ gallons for adults

Ball Python Must-Haves

- Appropriately sized habitat
- Substrate
- Moss
- Water dish
- Hideaway box
- Plants
- Heat emitter
- Heat fixture
- UV light emitter
- Feeding tongs
- Thermometers
- Thermostat
- Humidity gauge
- Frozen rodents

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Habitat

- Young ball pythons need a 10–20 gallon tank, while adults should be housed in a breeder tank 40 gallons or larger.
- Keep enclosures well-ventilated and secure with a screened lid to prevent escape.
- A ball python will reach their adult size within three years.
- Ball pythons are solitary animals that should be housed alone.
- One end of their habitat should be kept warmer at 95 degrees, and the other end cooler, around 78 degrees.
- Install an over-the-tank basking lamp and heat bulb to supply radiant heat.
- Provide your ball python eight to 12 hours of UV light daily to imitate natural sunlight.
- The ideal humidity range for a ball python habitat is 40–60%, increasing to around 70% during shedding cycles.
- Paper-based bedding, reptile carpet, cypress mulch, coconut husk, and aspen wood shavings are all suitable substrates.
- Avoid using pine and cedar bedding.
- Climbing branches can be installed in the habitat to enrich your snake's environment and encourage exercise.
- Add moistened sphagnum moss to the inside of a hideout box kept on the warm side of a ball python's enclosure to create a humid hide. Moss should be replaced often to prevent mold from forming.
- Adding plants and a terrarium background to a snake's enclosure can enrich the snake's environment and add some aesthetic flair. Make sure that any live plants added to the enclosure are non-toxic.

Décor & More

- Provide your ball python with at least two hiding areas, like synthetic or natural wood hiding logs. Place one on the warmer side of the enclosure and one on the cooler side.



Cleaning & Maintenance

Environment

Ball pythons enjoy a clean, tidy, thoughtfully laid out living area just as much as you do. Make sure to clean and disinfect their habitats at least once a week using the proper cleaners, and keep you and your snake healthy by always washing your hands before and after handling them or their tank.

Enclosure Cleaning 101

1. Move your snake to a secure environment.
2. Remove any old substrate, decor, and accessories from the habitat.
3. Scrub the empty tank and any furnishings with a reptile habitat cleaner or 3% bleach solution. The bleach solution should sit for at least 10 minutes to ensure the surfaces are disinfected properly. If using a commercial habitat cleaner, follow the manufacturer's instructions.
4. Rinse the habitat and accessories thoroughly with water, making sure to remove any trace amounts or residual smells left by the cleaning agent or bleach solution.
5. Allow the habitat and its contents to dry completely before placing new substrate and clean accessories into the habitat.
6. Return the snake to the clean habitat.

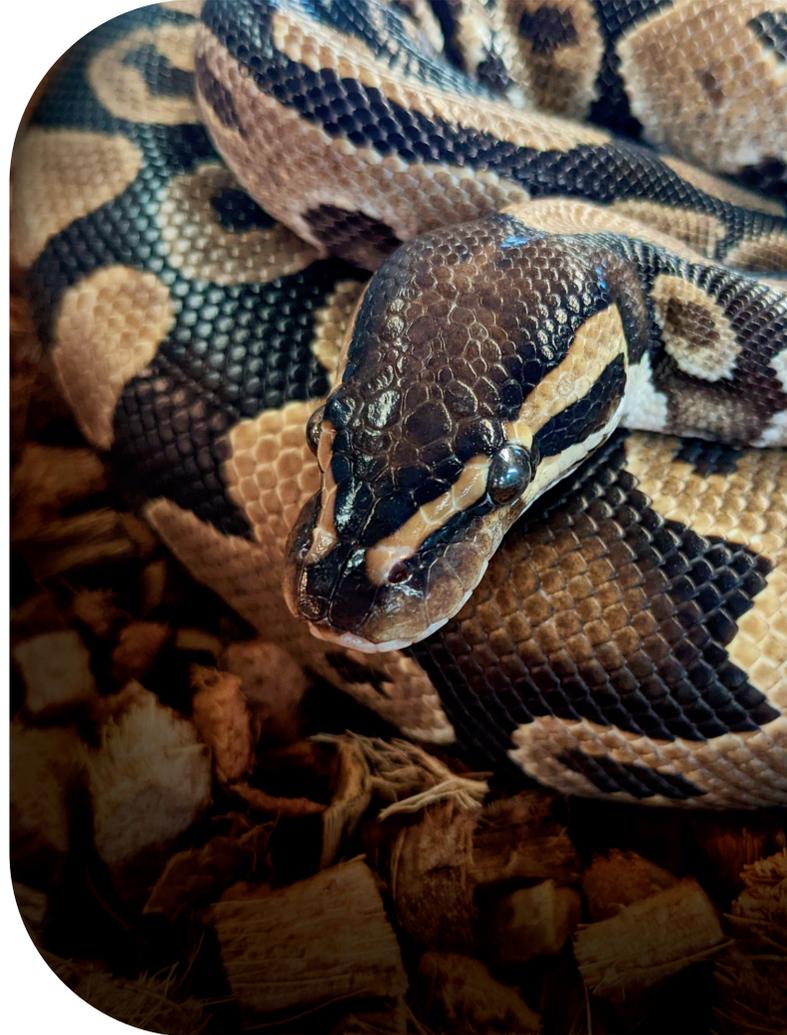


Diet

- Ball pythons feed on whole, thawed frozen rodents, such as mice and rats.
- Offer food at night and use feeding tongs rather than your fingers.
- Juvenile ball pythons should be fed once a week, while adults only need to be fed every one to two weeks. Baby snakes can be fed every other day.
- Start juvenile snakes on a diet of “pinkies,” or young and nearly hairless mice. As your ball python grows into adulthood, they can be transitioned to a diet of larger mice and rats.
- Prey should be around the same size as the snake’s width at mid-body. For example, if the snake’s midsection is 1 ½” in diameter, its prey should also be no wider than 1 ½”.
- Fresh, clean water should always be available and replaced daily. Water dishes should be large and shallow enough to allow snakes to soak.

Feeding Tips

Don’t feed your ball python live prey. Live rodents can become aggressive and cause severe wounds to your ball python that may lead to life-threatening infections.



Diet

How to Thaw Frozen Food for Ball Pythons

1. Remove the desired amount of food items from the bag.
2. Put the frozen food in a sealed plastic bag and place it in a thawing container filled with cold water.
3. Keep the food in the water until it thaws. Discard the cold water.
4. Refill the thawing container with warm water.
5. Place the thawed prey, still in the sealed plastic bag, in the warm water. Allow it to soak for 10–15 minutes before discarding the water.
6. Just before feeding, run nearly hot water over the thawed food to warm it above room temperature.
7. Remove the thawed food from the container and plastic bag.
8. Offer the food to your pet immediately with feeding tongs.

Important Feeding Info

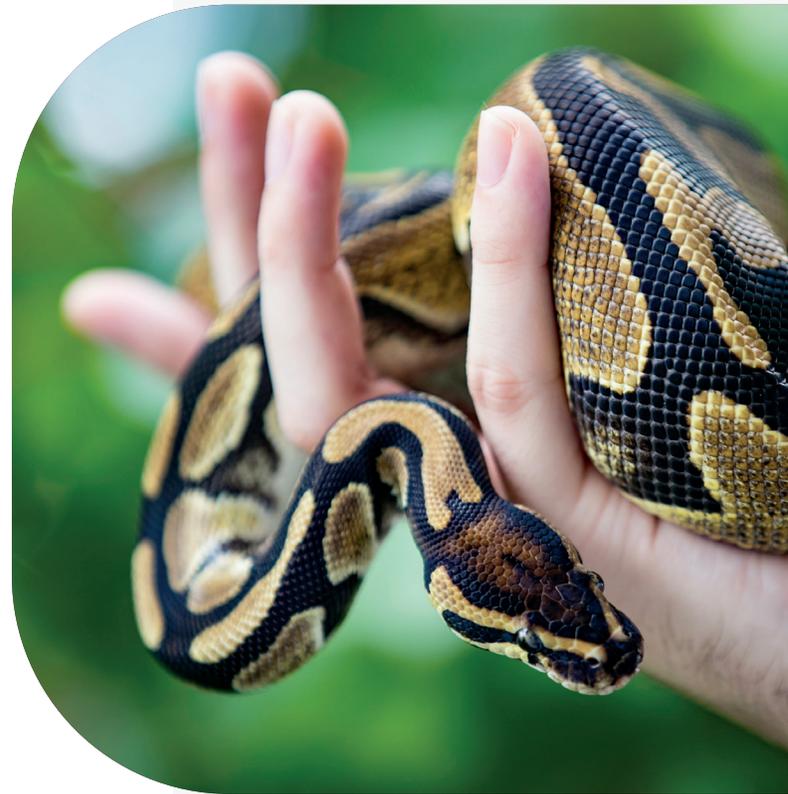
Ideally, feeding sessions should take place in a separate enclosure if you have one.

The thawing container should only be used for preparing your reptile's frozen meals and not for your personal cooking.

Never use a microwave to thaw or warm frozen rodents, and never offer food that's still frozen to a pet.

Frozen food that is not consumed should never be re-frozen for future use, as this encourages bacteria to form in the food.

Avoid preparing frozen rodents in the same area that is used to prepare food. If this is unavoidable, be sure to disinfect the area thoroughly after use.



Health

Signs of a Happy, Healthy Python

- Clean, clear eyes
- Intact skin with no ulcerations or stuck shed
- Clean vent
- No swellings or bumps
- Regular flicking of their tongue
- Relaxed demeanor

When to Call a Vet

- Cloudy eyes or eyes that appear to have something stuck to the surface
- Blisters, ulcerations, stuck shed, or other lesions on the skin
- Discharge around the vent
- Tumors
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Sudden inability to move a section of their body

Ball python care sheet on PetMD.com:



Common Illnesses

- Anorexia (not eating)
- Internal or external parasites
- Skin infections
- Respiratory disease
- Oral infections
- Dysecdysis (stuck shed, retained eye spectacles)
- GI obstruction or constipation
- Dystocia (stuck eggs)
- Trauma including bite wounds if fed live prey
- Prolapses
- Inclusion body disease
- Burns

Shedding

Young ball pythons shed about once a month as they grow, while healthy adults usually shed only a few times a year. When ball pythons get ready to shed, their eye color turns cloudy blue or green, and their skin develops a whitish sheen. Avoid handling your python during this time, as snakes may become irritable while shedding.