



CAL ZOO'S REFERENCE SHEET



BALL PYTHONS

AKA: Royal Python

Latin name	Python regius	Maximum length	3 – 5 feet
Native to	West Africa	Approximate life span	15 – 20 years

GENERAL INFORMATION

Ball Pythons are one of the most popular pet snakes. Varying colors and patterns, docile nature and its small size, when compared with other pythons, make this a very desirable pet. The name "ball" comes from the defensive nature of the snake. When it feels threatened the Ball Python will coil into a ball with its head protected in the middle. The Europeans refer to this snake as the Royal Python. This comes from its species name "regius". Ball Pythons reach sexual maturity in 3 years. All baby Ball Pythons sold by California Zoological Supply are farm raised in West Africa.

ENCLOSURE

The Enclosure should be no shorter than ½ the snake's body length. Baby Ball Pythons can live in a 20-gallon aquarium up to a year. Pythons are notorious escape artists! Your enclosure can never be too secure. Provide plenty of ventilation and a secure hiding place. Baby Ball Pythons like to climb, so provide them with lots of sturdy climbing branches.

SUBSTRATE

Pine shavings, Zoo Med REPTIBARK™, rabbit pellets or Zoo Med CAGE CARPET. Do not use cedar shavings! Its oils are toxic to reptiles.

TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Daytime temperatures 85 – 88°F. Do not let nighttime temperatures drop below 78°F.

HEATING

Reptiles need to be able to regulate their body temperature, so a temperature range must be provided. Use a Zoo Med REPTITHERM® UNDER-TANK-HEATER (UTH). Leave it on 24 hours a day. UTH's take a few hours to reach their optimal temperature. For easy control, use a Zoo Med REPTI-TEMP™ RHEOSTAT in conjunction with the UTH's or rock heaters. They will also slightly help to increase the air temperature if needed. Always use at least one thermometer in your reptile enclosures although two is optimal; one on the cool side and one on the warm side. A Zoo Med DELUXE ANALOG MIN/MAX THERMOMETER works great to show the high and low temperatures in a 24-hour period.

LIGHTING

UVB is not a necessity, but not harmful. If desired, use a Zoo Med REPTISUN™ 2.0 fluorescent 8 – 12 hours a day. The UVA this bulb provides is beneficial to the psychological well-being of reptiles. All reptiles and amphibians need a photo period (light cycle). A plug-in timer (for your lights only; do not use a timer for your heating devices) works well to develop a regular photo period of 8 – 10 hours of lighting 14 – 16 hours of dark. Reptiles and amphibians cannot see the red spectrum of light, so a large wattage red bulb is ideal for nighttime viewing.

FOOD & WATER

Ball Pythons are very shy eaters. You may find it takes your new pet a while to adjust to its new surroundings. Avoid handling your Ball Python until it has eaten on its own. Ball Pythons accept food best at night. Feed multiple Ball Pythons in separate containers. Baby Ball Pythons should be offered pinky to fuzzy mice once a week. Increase the size of the food as the snake grows. Once the snake starts eating weaned mice or rats, be sure you offer the food pre-killed. If the snake gets a bad strike on the rodent, the rodent may be able to turn its body in order to bite the snake. Severe damage to the snake or even death may occur. Keeping a supply of dead rodents in the freezer will ensure a steady supply of food in case obtaining them becomes a problem. Be sure to thaw rodents at room temperature before feeding them to your snake. Do not use the microwave! Liquids inside the rodent may become extremely hot and cause severe burns to your snake even if part of the rodent is still frozen. Do not attempt to pick up any snake with the scent of other animal on your hands or clothing. This may entice the snake to strike in hunger. Provide a sturdy water bowl that the snake can get in and out of easily and make sure the water is always fresh and clean.

NOTES

Always wash your hands before and immediately after handling reptiles and amphibians. Never leave live food long term with reptiles & amphibians. They can inflict severe harm, even kill your pet. If your animals take some time to eat or you feed them at night, leave a slice of potato, carrot or dry dog food for the live food items to eat. Your local pet shop is an ideal source for reptile and amphibian related books and supplies. Please make sure you read and become familiar with any instructions provided with reptile support products you may purchase. For further information on reptiles and amphibians we recommend you read *REPTILES MAGAZINE* and *THE VIVARIUM*. California Zoological Supply hopes you have enjoyed reading this reference sheet on Ball Pythons. We hope that our guidelines will assist you with the care or possible purchase of your new pet.

This sheet may be copied in its entirety only.