

OVERVIEW						
<p>The Ball Python of the rainforests western Africa gets its American popular name from its defensive behavior of tucking its head into its coils and pulling into a tight, protective ball. Now selectively bred in about one hundred color and pattern morphs, this docile and smallish python has fast become the most popular and beautiful snake pet. The Ball Python had a bad reputation for a reluctance to feed, but that was due to wild-caught snakes that were going through their natural seasonal cycle and were stressed by capture and import and/or were in poor health. Captive-bred Ball Pythons are typically great feeders and will quickly put on weight that will carry them through any natural stretches of fasting (especially common in adult males). They inhabit fairly humid areas and will not tolerate dryness. A humid retreat (hidebox with damp moss) is good if using a paper substrate, but many keepers use cypress mulch, fir bark or another substrate that holds some moisture. Daily cage misting is essential once they go into a shed maintain elevated humidity and ensure proper shedding of the old skin.</p>						
ENVIRONMENT						
Conditions »	Day Temp	78-88°F	Night Temp	76-82°F	Humidity	75-90%
Heat Source »	Belly heat; thermostat-controlled undertank heat mat at one end of enclosure					
HOUSING		<p>Ball Pythons should be housed individually in secure enclosures. Snakes are escape artists and any housing must prevent even the smallest opportunity for the snake to exit. Clear plastic shoe and sweater boxes are popular for hatchlings, and small plastic terrariums may also be used. An 10 gallon aquarium will also work for hatchlings and 15-30 gallons for juveniles, but a larger reptile cage or large blanket box with several square feet of floor space is required for an adult.</p> <p>Heat is best provided using a heat tape or mat beneath one end of the enclosure. It should be situated to provide a thermal gradient from the warmer heated end of the housing to the cooler end. Heat sources should always be controlled with a thermostat to prevent overheating.</p> <p>A newsprint or paper towel substrate is recommended for baby Ball Pythons. A 2" depth of substrate like shredded paper is popular with breeders for adults and many use cypress mulch (Zoo Med Forest Floor) to maintain higher relative humidity. Fresh water should be available at all times in a sturdy bowl. KEEP HUMIDITY RELATIVELY HIGH!</p>				
DIET		<p>Ball Pythons are rodent eaters. Our well-started babies are eating live large hopper or young mice and prey size should be similar in diameter to the snake's head. Pinkie or fuzzy rats may be used after a switching process, but pinkie or fuzzy mice are too small and will usually be refused! Use young mice until the snake has fed several times and then try switching to thawed-frozen or pinkie/fuzzy rats if preferred. Feed one live mouse first and then follow that meal with the thawed-frozen or rat you are switching to. <i>We only sell snakes feeding on their own. If your baby does not accept live young mice and is not in a shed, check proper temperature range and ensure that the snake is left undisturbed for several days (DO NOT HANDLE!) prior to feeding attempt and ensure the snake has an appropriate hiding place and security.</i> Adults will eat small rats. Most Ball Pythons will readily switch to feeding on thawed-frozen rodents offered from rubber-tipped forceps.</p>				