

Boa and Python

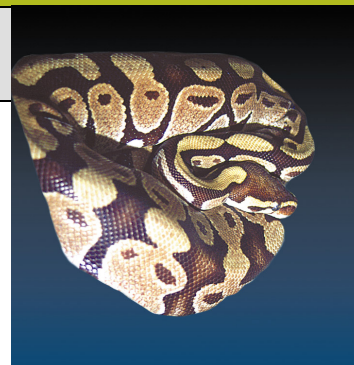
Includes common boas and ball python



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Boas and pythons are among the most commonly kept snakes and come in many varieties. They are carnivorous animals and are most active at dusk while hunting for their prey on the ground or in the trees.



Is a boa or python the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

1. I can accommodate a snake that will grow to five feet or more.
2. I am comfortable handling a snake.
3. I am comfortable feeding live food to a snake.
4. I can commit to providing proper care for this snake.
5. A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered, "Yes" to these statements, a boa or python may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a boa or python and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

Average Size 3 to 15 feet long depending on species **Life Span** 15 to 30 years depending on species

Diet Frozen-thawed, appropriately sized rodents, warmed to room temperature

Feeding Feed most adult snakes every two weeks or as needed; feed juveniles once or twice a week
Feed in a separate tank so your snake does not associate your hand or opening the habitat with feeding

If feeding your snake live rodents, do not leave them unattended. Live rodents can injure the snake, sometimes fatally.

Housing Size – Appropriate size and shape habitat to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise
Substrate – Aspen shavings, mulch-type commercial material; unbleached paper towels, soil, dampened sphagnum moss, and bark; pelleted paper; avoid gravel and artificial turf as they are too harsh for the snake's skin
Habitat – Provide a hiding area large enough for snake to fit inside and a branch or shelf to climb on
Temperature – Temperature gradient (78° F for the cool end and up to 95° F for the warm end); recommend radiant heat; use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source; use an under tank heater as secondary source
Lighting – Snakes need a photoperiod light cycle; provide 8–12 hours of light daily; do not leave white light on at all times; to view snakes at night use a black or infrared light
Water – Provide a bowl of chlorine-free water large enough for the snake to soak in
Do not house different species of reptiles together

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Recommended Supplies
<i>Depends on species</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat with secure lid | <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer and humidity gauge |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate substrate | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiding or retreat area |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Large water dish | <input type="checkbox"/> Incandescent bulb or ceramic heater |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Light timer | <input type="checkbox"/> Under tank heat source |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Book about boas or pythons | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrared or black light |

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Normal Behavior and Interaction

As snake prepares to shed, their eyes will turn a milky blue over the course of a few days and their body color will begin to dull and develop a whitish sheen

Searches its habitat when hungry, appearing alert and even restless; appetite may diminish during winter months

Will remain quiet in the hiding area or coiled up for long periods of time; should display an alert demeanor when disturbed

Habitat Maintenance

Clean out water dish and replace water daily; remove feces daily; remove food if not eaten immediately

Thoroughly clean the tank at least once a week: set snake aside in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all smell of bleach; dry the tank and furnishings; and add clean substrate.

Grooming and Hygiene

Snakes will regularly shed their skin; if old pieces of skin remain after shedding, mist the snake and gently rub off the old skin.

Because all snakes are potential carriers of infectious diseases and salmonella, always wash your hands before and after handling your snake and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.

Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a snake and should consider not having a snake as a pet. For more information regarding snakes and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at <http://www.petco.com/pet care info/animal care sheets>.

Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Active and alert
- Clear eyes
- Healthy skin
- Eats regularly
- Regular shedding of skin
- Sheds skin in one complete piece

Common Health Issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Dermatitis	Blisters; rapid shedding caused by an unclean habitat or one that is too cold or damp.	Clean the cage and lower humidity. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
Respiratory Disease	Labored breathing; mucus in mouth or nostrils; can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.	Keep snake warm and dry. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
Stomatitis	White, cheese-like substance in the mouth; loss of teeth and appetite	If untreated, can be fatal. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
Ticks and Mites	Parasites on the skin, can transmit diseases.	Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.

Red Flags

- Unusually frequent or infrequent shedding
- Lethargic or reluctant to eat
- Abnormal feces
- Difficulty shedding
- Vomiting
- Bumps or spots on skin
- Labored breathing
- White, cheese-like substance in mouth

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Sources

Keeping and Breeding Snakes by Chris Mattison
The Manual of Lizards and Snakes by Marc Staniszewski
The Proper Care of Snakes by Armin Geus

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.