



BALL PYTHON BEGINNER CARE SHEET

Congratulations on your new Ball Python! You are going to need to know how to take care of your new animal. This care sheet is geared toward hatchlings and juveniles. If you learn better by watching videos, then I recommend this great video from my buddy Sal at House of Gaia Pythons:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsjTph_TfFA

If you've purchased a sub adult or an adult Ball Python, I recommend this video from my friends at Snake Discovery for the care of your more mature ball Python:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mP8bEsgT-k8>

Must haves:

Container with secure lid – small and secure feeling to the snake is the best – especially hatchlings or juveniles.

Thermostat – DO NOT use heating products without a thermostat.

Ventilation

Water bowl

Safe decorations

Hide(s)

Under container heat pad

Cypress mulch or coco bedding

IR temperature gun

Ball pythons like small secure areas. They don't need a huge enclosure - and in fact that can cause feeding response issues. The large vast spaces make them feel insecure, especially as hatchlings or juveniles. Start with a small enclosure. You'll have the next 20 years to house your ball Python in a larger enclosure. For hatchlings I recommend a six quart to 12 quart locking lid tub that you can ventilate. Once an animal is thriving in this setting, growing and eating regularly, pooping and shedding consistently, then you can consider moving it up to a 10 gallon aquarium or vivarium/terrarium setup.

Most often when a customer follows up to tell me that their snake is not eating, the first question I ask is “how big is the enclosure?” Almost invariably, it is a 10/20/40 gallon enclosure for a hatchling or juvenile. Some can thrive in this setting - most will not.

You'll need a heat pad on the bottom of one side of the enclosure that covers approximately 25% of the bottom of the enclosure. This heat pad needs to be incorporated with a thermostat and set to 90°F. The heat pad goes on the outside of the glass and you will temp the inside of the glass to 90°. Temp the glass - not the top of the substrate. Otherwise, the ambient temperature should be 80° Inside the tub. Generally unless you keep your house very cold, the heat pad on one side will create a warm enough temperature throughout the small tub.

If possible, blackout three sides of the tub as well. Again the ball python wants to feel secure. You may or may not need a hide in the tub. A small hide or plastic garden pot saucer turned upside down works great. Sometimes my snakes even wear these saucers almost like a little hat - just like a blanket that doesn't even cover them completely. Again, they just want to feel secure and the more things surrounding them, the better they're going to feel.

Tubs are also great for controlling humidity. Whether you use paper towels, cypress mulch, or coco husk, you'll need to spray it down from time to time to maintain humidity. If you see condensation accumulating or dripping from the roof it's too damp. If the substrate is drying out within a day or two you have too much ventilation in the tub.

When you get the snake home, I recommend letting it be for a day or two before trying to feed it. Minimize handling or do not handle at all until the snake has eaten one or two meals

As far as feeder prey, refer to the information that I give you when you purchase your snake on what prey item it is eating. I'll identify whether it's eating live or frozen rodents and the species of rodent. All of my animals begin their lives feeding on ASFs (African soft fur rodents) and as soon as possible I transfer all of my animals to frozen thawed rats for their feeder prey.

When selecting the feeder rodent, my recommendation is to go just slightly smaller than the largest part of the snake in reference to the size of the rodent. Some people say to go slightly larger, but I don't think that there is a need for that. It can be challenging to get your animal to eat for the first time in a new environment. In fact, I recommend for the first few meals sizing down significantly just to get them to start eating in their new home. I recommend feeding in the enclosure that they live in. I do not know why some people recommend taking them out and putting them in a different enclosure to feed. It does nothing but stress the animal and moving an animal immediately after it has eaten is likely to cause regurgitation or digestive issues.

I recommend feeding pet hatchlings and juveniles once a week. Once an animal reaches 400 grams you can feed it once every two weeks. And once an animal reaches 1000 grams you can feed it once every three weeks.

Keep your animal's enclosure clean. Change and clean the water bowl twice a week. Remove feces and urine as they occur.