



A BETTER LIFE FOR EXOTIC PETS

RAINBOW BOA CARE GUIDE

Native to: Typically found in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil and it's neighbours

Habitat: Humid, overgrown woodland, near to pools of water

Behaviour: Nocturnal and terrestrial, they can climb but stay low and sometimes burrow.

Social: Solitary.

Size: Range between 4-6 feet long.

Lifespan: Anywhere between 20-30 years.



ANATOMY

Shedding Skin:

As they grow and heal old injuries, boas will shed their skin in one go, creating a perfect layer of skin that slides off.

Rainbow Effect:

Rainbow boas get their name from their iridescent scales that reflect light to display a oil slick effect.

Spectacles:

Boas do not have eyelids, but they do have special scales that protect their eyes called spectacles. The scales come off with every shed cycle as normal.

Hooked Teeth:

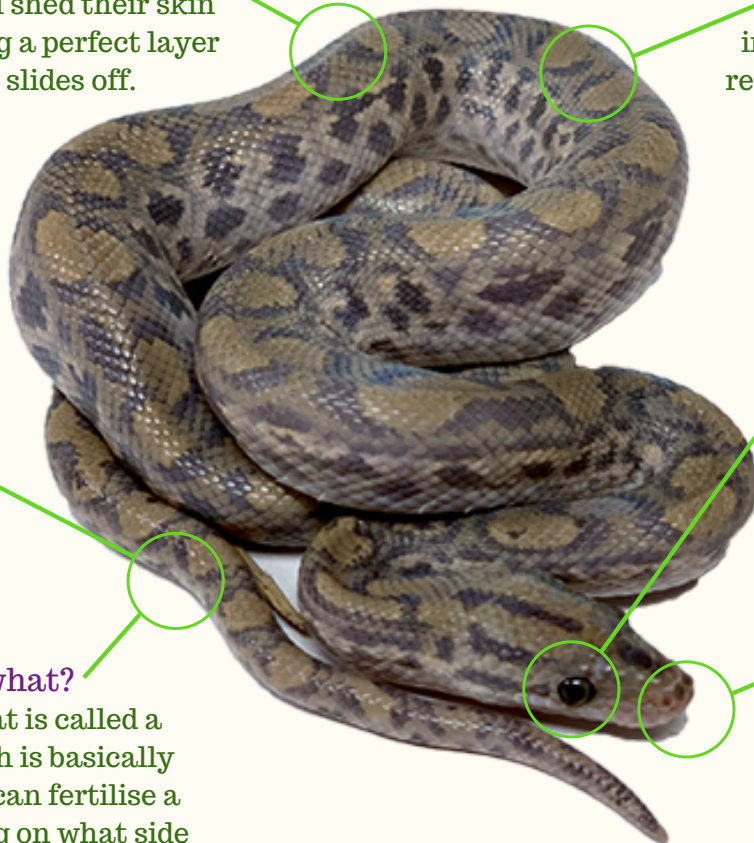
Boas do not have venom to kill their prey, but instead constrict and crush them. They use they're many hooked teeth to hold on tight while squeezing the life from their prey.

Primitive:

Rainbow Boas still display spurs either side of the cloaca, left behind from its predecessors hind legs.

Two of what?

Males have what is called a hemipenis, which is basically two organs that can fertilise a female, depending on what side the female is on to the male.






DIETS

Boa's are carnivorous animals, with a slow metabolism/digestive system. It's important to feed them a prey item appropriately sized for the snake - no larger than the widest part of the body. Take care not to feed too frequently, as this can cause fat to build around the vital organs.

I feed according to size & condition in the below chart

Feeder Type	Frequency
Medium Mouse/Rat Fuzzy	Every 10-12 days
Adult Mouse/Small Weaner Rat	Every 10-14 days
Large Weaner Rat	Every 14-18 days
Small Rat	Every 2-3 weeks
Medium Rat	Every 3-4 weeks



We also feed chicks once or twice a year as a treat.

FEEDING FROZEN/THAWED

Feeding frozen/thawed is the recommended method for a Rainbow boa.

Prey must be fully defrosted in the fridge before offering to your snake and you will see a better feeding response if the prey animal is warm. You can do this by submerging it in a plastic bag in warm water or blowing with a warm-heated hairdryer.

Boas are known to be aggressive feeders, with a strong bite. Make sure to use long tongs when offering prey animals and take care to avoid being bitten by mistake.

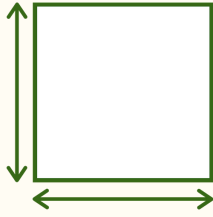
I defrost my feeders over the day in a bag in the fridge, and warm with a hair dryer before offering to the snake using tongs.

DO NOT HANDLE YOUR SNAKE FOR 48HOURS AFTER FEEDING TO AVOID REGURGITATION

WATER

Clean, fresh water should be available at all times in the enclosure. Provide a water dish large enough for the snake to soak in if it wants to, and change daily.

ENCLOSURES



Space:

You need enough space for the snake to stretch out fully, with at least 2ft of height to allow them some climbing space.

We use a 4x2x2ft wooden vivarium for a 6ft adult Brazilian Rainbow Boa.



Lighting:

They need a day and night cycle and will benefit from using a low-level UVB light on during daylight hours.

We use a 2ft UVB tube at 5% for our Rainbow Boas. A caged, compact 5% UVB bulb will also be suitable.



Temperature:

They need a hot spot of no more than 28°C as they are unable to tolerate high temperatures.

We use a ceramic heat emitting bulb, powered through a pulse thermostat at one end of the enclosure.



Humidity:

Rainbow boas need a constant high humidity to maintain good health. No less than 60%, ideally 80%.

We use automatic fogging systems to maintain humidity levels, with occasional misting to help.



Substrate:

A deep, soil-based substrate is needed, like coco-fibre mixed with top soil and orchid bark.

We use a soil and coco-fibre mixed base, about 3" deep, topped with fine grade orchid bark.



Decor:

Lots of hiding and burrowing places, as well as some low-level climbing branches. Provide plenty of plant cover and a pool for soaking.

Please see examples page.

MAINTENANCE

Remove poo and urates daily

Mist or fog twice daily

Fully change substrate when needed - this should be done approximately once a month

Clean decor items when soiled - fully disinfect monthly

Variations may apply when using a bio-active set-up

ENCLOSURE EXAMPLE

HOW TO SAVE MONEY

Setting up the tank is often the most expensive part of getting a new exotic. Between the tank, the electrics, the decor and maintenance tools, the cost can be crippling. Here are some of my tips on budgeting...

Take your time

You should never rush into a purchase anyway, so buy what you need piece by piece - this will give you time to research rainbow boas while you build your setup.

Don't just buy new

Using tools like Facebook, eBay and other sales sites will save a lot of money!

Use a Bio active substrate

Bioactive substrates will allow you to add clean-up-crew and plants to the setup that can make one lot of substrate last the animals entire life

Get creative

You don't need the flashiest, top of the range decor. Try making hides out of old Tupperware, jars or cardboard boxes. So long as it functions as it needs to and doesn't cause a fire hazard it's fine.

COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS

The below are a look at some common health problems you may see. It is still, ALWAYS recommended to seek veterinary assistance for anything out of the ordinary.

Stuck Shed & Retained Eyecaps

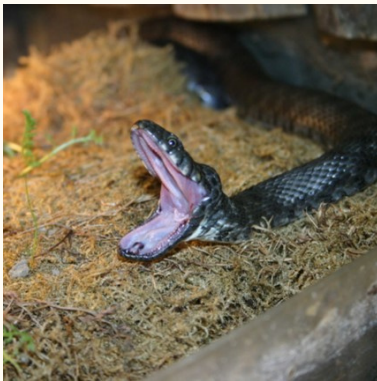


A snake should be able to shed fully in one clean piece. Sometimes they will struggle to remove the skin around the head, eyes and tail, which can cause problems further down the line if not removed.

Once you notice the stuck shed, place the snake in a shallow tub of luke-warm water (about 2cm deep) to allow the skin to soften. After 20 minutes, bring them out and rub them with a damp washcloth until clear.



Respiratory Infection



In cases where humidity or temperatures are incorrect for a prolonged period of time, boas can develop an infection of the upper respiratory tract. This will show as visible saliva or mucus in the mouth, open-mouth breathing, wheezing or abnormal behaviours.

Vet advice should be sought asap, as antibiotics will likely be necessary. This can easily be prevented with correct husbandry and picked up through regular health checks.



IBD



IBD stands for Inclusion Body Disease, and is a viral infection common to boas. It can cause neurological issues such as stargazing and twisting. It highly transmissible via blood, and has no cure as yet.

Vet advice should be sought if these symptoms are noticed. This is a slow-acting disease and care should be taken to ensure full quarantine from other boas or pythons. Creating an accessible enclosure is advised.



Scale Rot



Scale rot is a wide term to cover any infection or damage to the scales and skin layer. This can include blisters, burns or infections. You should be able to notice any changes in colour (not shedding) and any visible sores.

This should also be checked by a vet. It is usually a result of excessive humidity, so this should be reduced to the correct level in the enclosure. Betadine baths for non-open sores will help keep the infection under control.

