



A BETTER LIFE FOR EXOTIC PETS

BOA CONSTRICTOR CARE GUIDE

Native to: Found throughout Central & South America

Habitat: Rainforests, with access to plant cover and pools.

Behaviour: Nocturnal and terrestrial. They are generally slow moving and can be temperamental.

Social: Solitary.

Size: With many varieties, they can range from 4-10ft.

Lifespan: Anywhere between 20-30 years.



THE BOA CONSTRICTOR

Boa constrictor

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.

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.

Heavy-Weights:

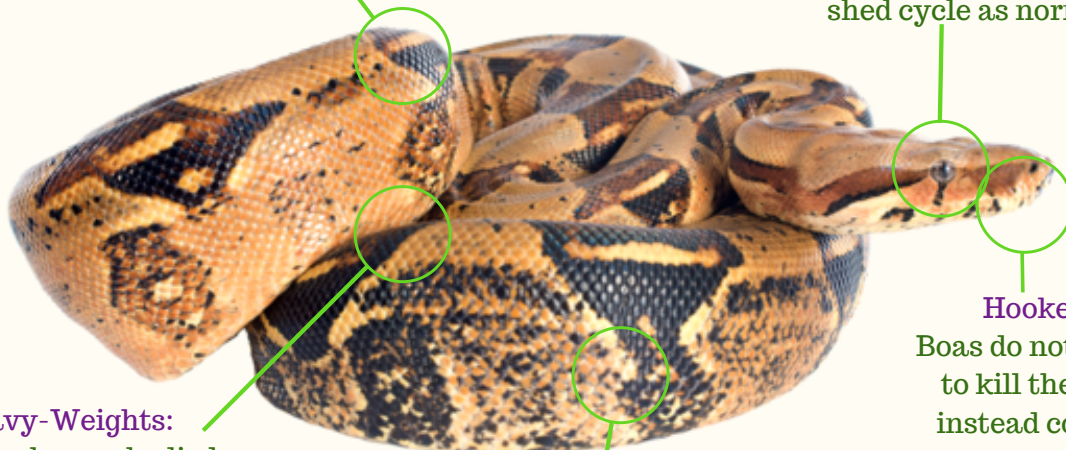
Boas are heavy-bodied snakes, some getting up to 15kg! They are strong and impressive but will potentially reach huge sizes so they'll need plenty of space!

Variety:

There are many variations of boa constrictors, including dwarf species.

Hooked Teeth:

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



DIETS

Boa's are obligate carnivores, 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. They do not require supplementation in most cases, as they are fed whole prey and can digest all but fur.

Depending on what prey item you feed, you should wait the below outlined period of time before feeding again.



Mouse

An occasional prey item.

Medium - 10-12 days

Large - 10-12 weeks



Rat

Main prey option.

Small Weaner - 1-2 weeks

Large Weaner - 2-3 weeks

Small - 3-4 weeks

Medium - 4-6 weeks

Large - 6-8 weeks



Birds

An occasional prey item.

Day-Old Chick - 1-2 weeks

Quail - 4-6 weeks

FEEDING FROZEN/THAWED

Feeding frozen/thawed is the recommended method for a 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 warmed before offering. 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.

We defrost our 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. Ensure there is a source of water in the enclosure that easily can be cleaned and replaced.

ENCLOSURE EQUIPMENT



Vivarium Brands:

Repti-Life, Viperia, VivExotic and Pro Viv are our recommended brands for the vivarium.



Heat Bulb Holder:

Any ceramic heat bulb holder will be suitable. Arcadia is a good brand, but most brands can't go wrong with this piece of kit. The protective cage is much the same, just ensure it can easily be opened to change the bulb.



Dimming Thermostat:

Arguably the most important piece of equipment, this controls the power to the heat bulb to maintain a steady temperature. Habistat or Microclimate are recommended brands.

UVB:

The Arcadia 6% Pro T5 unit is ideal, with a Lamp Guard Pro. The wattage and size depends on enclosure size..



Heat Bulb:

The Arcadia halogen heat bulb is our recommended basking spot lamp. A normal white heat lamp would also be okay. Wattage depends on your enclosure size.

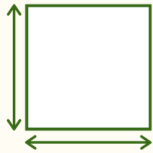


Digital Thermometer x2:

Allows you to check the temperature is correct in basking spot and cool side.

Buying items second hand can be a great way to save money, however you will not get any warranty when doing so, so use caution. For vivariums or décor, ensure the items are thoroughly disinfected before use. We don't recommend second hand items that are made of wood or other porous materials.

ENCLOSURE SET-UP



Space:

You need enough space for the snake to stretch out fully, so size depends on your boa.



Lighting:

They will benefit from 5-7% UVB light during the day, with total darkness overnight.



Temperature:

They need a basking spot at 32°C, with an area below 24°C to allow for thermoregulation.



Humidity:

Humidity should vary between 55-75%. It should not remain in the upper end all the time.



Substrate:

A deep layer of substrate is ideal to promote burrowing. Orchid bark or sand/soil mixes make good options for boas as they hold humidity without growing mould.



Décor:

Lots of hiding places, as well as some low-level climbing opportunities. A fully enclosed hide on either side of the enclosure and a water bowl big enough to soak in.

EXAMPLE



The example above is using recommended heating/lighting and uses live plants. Fake plants work just as well and require much less maintenance!

MAINTENANCE

Spot clean daily, removing any faeces/urates.

Fully change substrate when needed - this should be done approximately once every couple of months.

Clean decor items when soiled - fully disinfect monthly.

Change water regularly - fully disinfect the bowl weekly.

Replace the UVB bulb as per manufacturer guidelines.

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

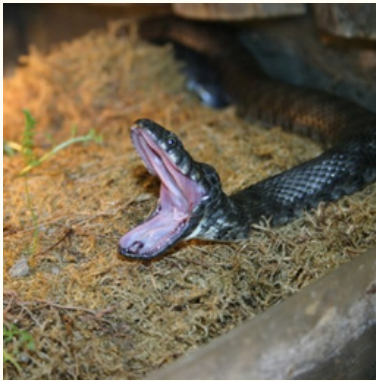


A snake should be able to shed fully in one clean piece. Sometimes they will struggle to remove the skin around the head, eyes and tail, which can cause problems further down the line if not removed.

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 is 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.

