



A BETTER LIFE FOR EXOTIC PETS

ROYAL PYTHON CARE GUIDE

Native to: Sub-Saharan Africa and the Central African Republic

Habitat: Grassland, scrublands and sparsely wooded areas

Behaviour: They are nocturnal, semi-arboreal snakes that like to burrow as much as climb. They can be clumsy!

Social: Solitary.

Size: Males are usually 3-4ft, while females can be larger (between 4-6ft). This is not a strict rule however.

Lifespan: Anywhere up to 30-40 years.



THE ROYAL PYTHON *Python regius*

Two of what?

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



Spectacles:

Royals 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.

Shedding Skin:

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

Wide Variety:

Royal pythons are popular among breeders due to the extreme diversity in colour morphs. They come in hundreds of different colours and patterns.

Heat Detectors:

Royal pythons have a line of holes along their upper jaw, which are used to detect heat signals. These are called heat pits and are vital when hunting for food.

DIETS

Royal pythons are obligate carnivores, with a slow metabolism and 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. How long you wait to feed again depends on the prey item you feed. Outlined below are the feeder items you might use with how long we would leave them to digest before feeding again.



Mouse

An occasional prey item.

Small - 5-7 days

Medium - 7 days

Large - 1-2 weeks



Rat

Main prey option.

Fuzzy - 7 days

Small Weaner - 1-2 weeks

Large Weaner - 2-3 weeks

Small - 3-4 weeks

Medium - 4-6 weeks



Birds

An occasional prey item.

Quail Chick - 5-7 days

Day-Old Chick - 2-3 weeks

Quail - 4-6 weeks

FEEDING FROZEN/THAWED

Feeding frozen/thawed is the recommended method for a royal python.

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.

Royals are known to be picky eaters. Ensuring the prey animal is warm enough is a huge factor, but don't be alarmed if they go off food; provided they are not losing weight, it isn't uncommon for them to fast. If they continue to fast beyond 4 months and you're concerned, don't be afraid to seek veterinary advice.

**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 often.

ENCLOSURE EQUIPMENT



Vivarium Brands:

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

UVB:

The Arcadia ShadeDweller (7% Pro T5) unit, with a 20" Lamp Guard Pro is what we recommend.



Heat Bulb:

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



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.

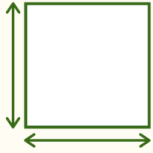


Digital Thermometer x2:

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. A 4ft vivarium would be the minimum.



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 23°C to allow for thermoregulation.



Humidity:

Royal pythons need an ambient humidity of 40-50%, with occasional spikes.



Substrate:

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



Décor:

Lots of hiding and burrowing places, as well as some 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 ALWAYS recommended to seek veterinary assistance for anything out of the ordinary.

Stuck Shed & Retained Eyecaps

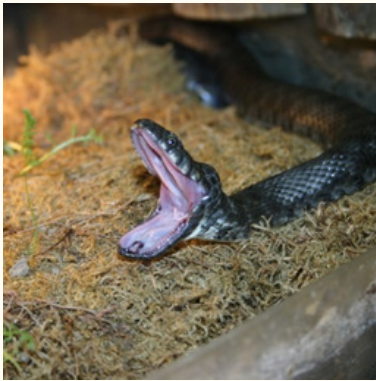


A snake should be able to shed fully in one clean piece. Sometimes they will struggle to remove the skin around the head, eyes and tail, which can cause problems further down the line if not removed.

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, royals 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.



Fasting



Royal Pythons are prone to losing appetite and refusing food for long periods of time. This can be caused by improper enclosures, stress, breeding seasons or underlying health problems. It can be very confusing.

First, you should re-look at the enclosure and see if there are ways you can make the snake feel more secure! Make sure the prey item is warm enough for the snake to detect. If this fails and they are losing weight, see a vet!



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.

