



Age references:

Hatchling: newborn to 6 months, juvenile: 6 months to 1.5 years, subadult: 1.5-2.5 years and finally adult: 2.5 plus years.

Hatchling Enclosure:

Baby ball pythons thrive in smaller enclosures such as an 18"x18"x24" enclosure with 3 sides covered.

Coverage of a glass sided terrarium can be achieved with aquarium cling wraps, paint or simple construction paper taped to the 3 sides.

- Important to note – hatchlings generally do best on a substrate layer of paper towels until they're around 4 months old. At this age, most of their fine motor skills are in place and they are less likely to strike at their food and end up with a mouth full of substrate.

*ZooMed and Exo-Terra both make great glass sided aquariums with screen tops.

Enclosures made from PVC are also great because they come with the sides already blocked and can be customized with different heating and light options.

- Naturia Exotics (Devin Skalla) and Focus Cubed Habitats are a couple companies that make quality cages and that I personally trust.
- Adult animals will do well in an 18"x18"x36" or 18"x18"x48" enclosure with the proper hides, water, and décor.

Another option for ball pythons is to make them a habitat out of a Rubbermaid or Sterilite tub, make sure you get the ones with secure lids! Some of my very first animals were kept in tubs like this. They're cheap, easy to maintain both heat and humidity in and easy to clean.

Cage Décor:

- Minimum of 2 hides is recommended to give the animal a sense of security.

* I prefer basic, plastic hides from LLL Reptiles or Reptile Basics because of their ease of cleaning.

- Decorations or foliage within the enclosure helps a young ball python feel more comfortable when moving around outside of the hides.
- A water bowl large enough for the snake to fit its whole body in is recommended.
 - Snakes occasionally will drink out of the bowls, but they frequently will submerge themselves in the bowl when they're too hot or going into their shed cycle.
- I prefer to use shredded coconut husk or organic cypress mulch for substrate with my animals and recommend it to all my customers.

Temperature:

- Ball pythons require a relative humidity of 55-60% on a regular basis and during shed cycles, humidity should be increased to 75-85%.
- A "Hotspot" of 90 °F on one side of the enclosure is important to aid in digestion, with a gradient into the low-mid 70's for the "cool side".
- Heating elements are also an important consideration for an enclosure. Glass sided terrariums can be heated well with a Ceramic Heat Emitter (CHE) on a thermostat. PVC Enclosures can be heated using a

Radiant Heat Panel (RHP) on a thermostat or from underneath using heat tape or an Under Tank Heater (UTH) on a thermostat. UTHs or CHEs can be purchased at your local pet store or online. Most RHPs and heat tape will need to be purchased online. LLL Reptile, Reptile Basics, Reptile Supply Co are all online businesses I have bought from in the past. Reptile Supply Co usually ships the quickest.

- Also note - CHEs are incredibly drying and may dry out your enclosure too much.

****It's extremely important to keep all heating elements on thermostats****

Lighting:

- Ball Pythons do NOT require a photoperiod in their habitat at all. PVC enclosures can be customized to include a light fixture within it. If choosing a glass sided terrarium, consider undercounter light fixtures placed on top of the screen. You can turn on and off these lights at your leisure for your own viewing pleasure.

Feeding:

- Appropriately sized prey items are equal to 1-1.5 times the circumference of the *largest* part of your animal.
- When fed an appropriate prey item, hatchling ball pythons feed readily approximately every 7 days. They can be fed this often until they're a year old, at this time, they should be fed every 10-12 days and at adult age, they thrive on feeding every 12-14 days.
- Snakes will eat what they prefer, and no one can absolutely guarantee an animal will eat frozen thawed prey items every time. Feed what your animal eats.
 - It is not uncommon for a snake to "skip meals". They have a simple digestive tract and occasionally they are not hungry, do not be alarmed.
 - DO NOT handle your animal 24 hours before or after feeding time, doing so can cause regurgitation.
 - Snakes should be fed inside their enclosure, moving to feed can cause stress and result in regurgitation.

Snake Behavior:

- Hatchling Ball Pythons can be defensive if they do not feel secure in their environment, shows of defense can include striking, biting, hissing and defecating during stressful handling. Most animals outgrow this quickly by their juvenile stage.
- When bringing home a new hatchling, in order for the animal to properly acclimate, avoid handling or feeding for the first week.
- Normal bowel movements can happen every week or two and should be well formed.
- Snakes do urinate but also pass urates, which are white, hard and chalk like. Sometimes they do this with or without a bowel movement.
- It's normal for a ball python to be hiding most of the time, they are nocturnal and most of their exploring is done between 12 and 3am.

Useful Knowledge:

- If using a glass sided aquarium with a screen top, you may have trouble keeping relative humidity up, if that's the case, HVAC tape can be taped over the screen to help keep the moisture inside.
- Ball Pythons are measured by their weight in grams instead of by length. If you want to keep track of your animal's weight, you can get a generic kitchen scale, use a bowl, zero the scale out and then put the snake in the bowl.
- Average weights/age:

- Hatchlings usually hatch out around 50-70 grams.
- By 5-6 months animals usually weigh 250-400 grams.
- By 1 year old, they usually weigh 900-1000 grams.
- An adult male ball python usually weighs 1200-1500 grams, while adult females weigh around 2200-2500 grams.
- The more you feed your animal, the bigger it will get. If you prefer the animal stays on the smaller side, feed less often.

Common questions:

How often will my snake shed?

- Snakes shed when they're growing, the younger your snake is, the more often they will shed because they're growing more. As they reach adulthood, their metabolism will slow down, as will their appetite and their shed cycles. Remember, there is no "right answer" to how often a snake sheds.
 - **How can I tell if my snake is going into a shed cycle?**
 - When snakes start going into a shed cycle, their skin will look dull, sometimes their bellies become a red/pink color and they will often not want to eat. Soon after you notice this, their eyes will become opaque or blue. During this time, your snake is blind and is more prone to striking at you and less likely to accept a food item. After they complete the opaque phase, their eyes and skin will clear up and you will find a shed skin in the enclosure. The entire process, start to finish, takes about 4-6 days.

Most important!

WHAT WORKS FOR SOME MAY NOT WORK FOR OTHERS!

I am always around for troubleshooting and support.