



# BALL PYTHON

Comprehensive Care Sheet







## BALL PYTHON INFO

**Scientific Name:** Python regius

**Native Habitat:** Western and Central Africa

**Lifespan:** With proper care, they can live between 20-30 years old.

**Size:** They will grow to be 4-6ft. Females are much larger in girth than males.

**Expert Level:** Beginners

**Popularity:** #1

**DISCOVER  
SNAKES  
RATING**

**87**

# The Ball Python

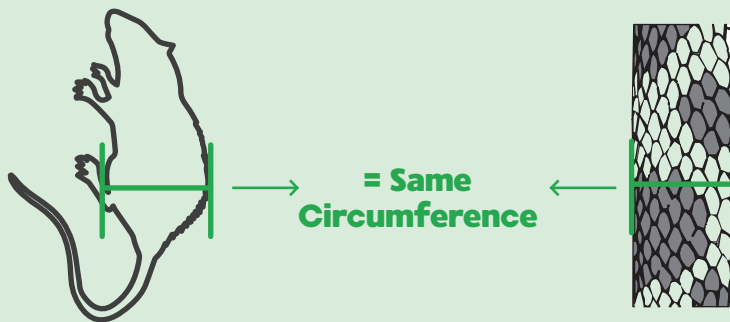
Sometimes referred to as Noodle Balls, Royal Pythons, these guys are by definition Ball Pythons. Earning their name because 90% of the time you'll find them like this:



No sense hiding my bias, I am a ball python fanatic. They are my personal favorite when it comes to pet snakes. So here is my enthusiastic Ball Python Care Sheet! In this in-depth care sheet I'm going to tell you why they are the best pet snake in the trade!

## Feeding & Diet

Unfortunately snakes can't be vegan. These Noodle Balls need to eat cheese bois to survive. Feed your ball python an appropriately sized rodent once a week. An appropriately sized rodent means the rat is no bigger in circumference than the ball python at its largest circumference. So the snakes thickness should be the rodents thickness:



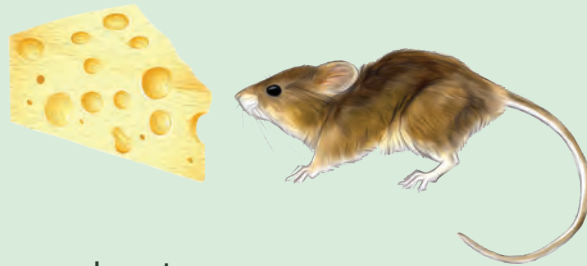
**You don't have to feed your snake live rats.** I actually recommend you don't feed live. You can buy packs of frozen rodents and then thaw them in warm water. Being that the rodent is already dead it can't fight back and hurt the snake. This way you can safely feed your snake. Doing this will also help kill off any potential illness or parasites in the rodent.



**Side tip**, never leave a live rodent unattended in with your snake, it could fight back and injure the snake. Remember a Ball Python's go to move is curling into a ball, they aren't ninja warriors.

**Smaller baby balls** will eat mice or baby rats. But I suggest switching to a rat as soon as possible as they will really help your ball python grow. Rats have different sizes and stages too so there's something for your ball python at any size. African Soft Furs are a personal favorite. Ball Pythons love them and they are a dense, nutritional food source.

**Do not handle your ball python** for at least a day after feeding, as this can lead to regurgitation and digestion issues. If your Ball python regurgitates, make sure to wait about a 1.5 weeks before feeding again and when you do feed it, give smaller meals for about a month before offering a regularly sized meal. If your Ball python regurgitates a second time, please visit a vet.



## Picky Eaters

Balls are known for being picky feeders, so do not immediately feel like you are doing something wrong if your snake does not wish to eat. If you have a newborn Baby Ball that has never taken a meal, they may refuse to take food for a few weeks as they are still full from the egg. After that, if your newborn is still refusing to eat, you may need to assist feed. If you have never assist fed before, please do this with a professional. Don't force feed your ball python.

If you have a baby ball python refusing to eat from a breeder or store that has said that they have already taken a few meals, your ball python may need some time to acclimate to their new environment. Also, double check to make sure that your temperatures and humidity are correct as this can also affect their eating habits.

### If they are still not eating here are some troubleshooting tips:

Try switching between live or frozen rodents, slightly warm the thawed rodent to a higher temp with warm water, switching between rats and mice, try a smaller rodent, try an African soft fur, try feeding it in the evening or right before bed and try feeding in a separate smaller feeding box, or try leaving the thawed rodent in the enclosure for a little while to see if the ball python is just a shy eater. Keep in mind that if your Ball python is refusing to eat, keep your offerings 10-14 days apart to keep your Ball python's feeding response strong. Don't over offer, it may stress the snake out.



They also tend to go off food when they shed. So if you notice your python is in shed that may be the culprit. If your ball python is an adult and it is refusing to eat, I wouldn't worry, they are well-known for going on fasts. Just keep offering food every 2 weeks and it will one day start eating again. We've seen a snake fast for 6 months. But they always go back on food.

Just keep an eye on your ball. If you notice an overall decline in its health and behavior during a fast seek veterinary attention.

## Habitat & Housing

A little history on where ball python comes from. Ball pythons are native to central and western Africa and thrive in these warm, tropical areas. So offering a warm, humid habitat for your ball python is what we need to do to make sure our scaly friends are happy and healthy.

## Humidity & Temperature

Ball pythons need around 60% humidity. Sometimes a bit higher when in shed. Around 65-70% is good. They are cold blooded so they also need a heat source. There are three ways to provide heat. A heating pad, a heating lamp, or keeping the ambient temperature of the room at the correct temperature. Your heating choice may depend on how you house your ball python. Since a heat pad may not be best to heat an entire terrarium and a heat lamp might be impossible if you're using a rack system.

For your noodle ball it's best to have a heat gradient from 85-91° on the warm end to 78-80° on the cool end. Depending on how you house your ball python the way to achieve the proper temperature will vary. See the habitat section below for more information on heating.

**Side tip**, a really important tool to have is a thermostat / hygrometer. These are pretty inexpensive and will tell you exactly the temp and humidity of your ball python's enclosure. Also check your heating devices regularly, you do not want to over heat your ball python.

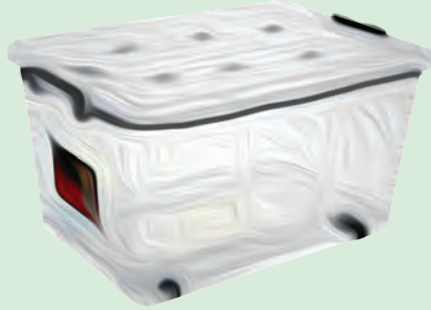
## Habitat

Ball Pythons feel safer in small quarters, so offer a hide or something for the ball python to feel safe. They also always need fresh water, so be sure to have a water bowl constantly filled with fresh water. Do not use distilled water or non-purified water. You can also look into getting *snake water conditioner* which is great for water bowls and removes chloramines and chlorine, detoxifies ammonia and nitrites, and provides essential ions and electrolytes which help to hydrate newly acquired animals.

Also do not cohabit your ball pythons, and especially don't house 2 different species of snake. Some people do successfully cohabit their Ball Pythons, but try to avoid it because it is not ideal for your snake. Your ball pythons can become stressed out or injured. The only time you should have two snakes together is during breeding.

So that's what a ball python needs. Now there are three different directions for your snake's enclosure, we use all of them and see no harmful effects from either option:





If you're ballin on a budget, look into using storage tubs. So long as you meet the requirements you can have a super cheap ball python set up, that'll keep your little noodle happy and healthy.

## Type of tub

Make sure the tub size is big enough for the snake. The rule I follow is you want a tub big enough to where the full length of the snake is less than 50% of the entire perimeter of the tub. I also recommend having some holes in the lid to allow your ball python to breath and help regulate humidity. Use a hydrometer to determine how many holes you need for 60% humidity. I also recommend having a transparent tub vs an opaque tub, while providing no light doesn't seem to harm the ball python. I've found housing them in a room which gets natural daylight adds some routine and order to their behavior opposed to spending every hour in total darkness. But also be sure to not expose your ball python to continuous lighting, they are nocturnal and a continuous light will stress them out.

## Heat

For plastic tubs I recommend a Heating Pad with Temp Control. Something big enough to heat half of the plastic tub.

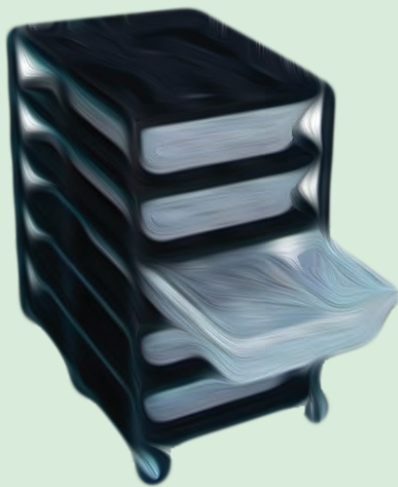
## Substrate

The most affordable substrate is newspaper or paper towels. It's also the cleanest. When your snake does it's business you just clean the tub and put fresh new paper towels down. You can also use a substrate like coconut bedding, aspen shavings, reptile bark. **DO NOT USE sand or cedar substrates.**

## Hide

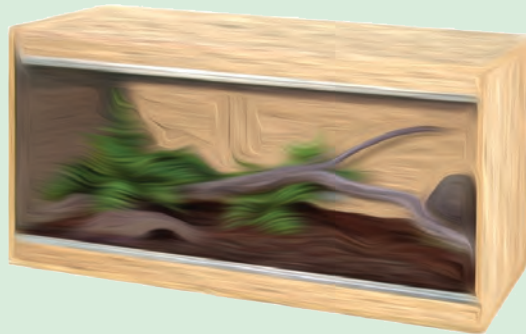
The cheapest hide you can use is a shoe box, or plastic container. So long as it's not toxic and big enough for the ball python it will work.





If you're looking to collect snakes and house multiple of them I highly suggest you look into a **rack system**. Something with flexwatt heat and a thermostat. The same rules apply with the plastic tubs, since most racks are just a bunch of tubs. Make sure it's big enough, make sure it has holes to breath and regulate humidity. And I also recommend you use transparent ones. You can also use the same sub-strates options. Providing hides are more optional with a racks. Some of my snakes have them and love them, others don't seem to use it ever. Being in a rack often makes the Ball Python feel plenty safe.

The next option is a **terrarium**. Some of our snakes have a terrarium and it's a great way to display your pet and give them an awesome enclosure. If you're ballin with some cash a really cool thing you can do is build a **Bioactive Vivarium** which includes creating a natural living space with plants, leaves, drift-wood, substrate, and living organisms that act like a natural clean up crew.



For a baby ball a 15-20 gallon terrarium is a good size. Any larger could stress them out. An adult ball python can thrive in a 40 gallon tank. With terrariums I do recommend getting and using a hide since there's no natural hide with a terrarium.

For terrarium heating, it will be very hard to provide a 85-91° ambient temp without a heat lamp. So I suggest using one of those. It also doesn't hurt to provide a heat pad underneath the hide spot. Belly heat can help them metabolize their food better.

For substrates, it is most popular to use a coconut bedding or reptile bark. These will help give it the "natural" feel. Paper towels or newspapers wouldn't look very good in a decked out terrarium.

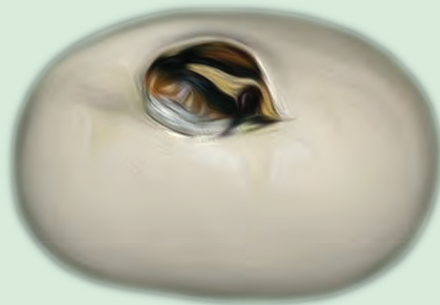


# Health & Grooming

## Shedding

Baby ball pythons will shed as they grow. A baby might shed every 4-6 weeks, and once they are adults they might shed every 2-3 months. If your humidity is right, they will give you a perfect, full shed every time.

Sometimes in the winter it can be harder to reach that 60% humidity. Here are a few ways to raise the humidity if you're falling short. An easy one is to dampen the bedding with a spray bottle, do this as often as needed to keep that 60% range. You can also try putting a bigger water dish in the enclosure. If using a terrarium cover the screen to help keep moisture in the terrarium. You can also look at getting a humidifier for the room to help keep the room around 60% humidity.



If your ball python had a bad shed and has some stuck shed we recommend giving your ball python a warm bath and let them soak for about 10-15 min. If you use a damp hand towel the stuck shed should come off easy, if it doesn't come off easy do not force it and rip it off.

It's best not to handle your ball python when they are shedding, they are easily irritated and should be left alone. Also do not remove the snake's skin when shedding. If they are shedding off their skin using your hand or a wet towel to help them rub against it is ok. But don't forcibly remove the shed as this can harm the ball python.

## Cleaning

Be sure to spot clean the ball python's enclosure anytime they dirty it. Also make sure they have fresh water present always.

Every month or so it's good to do a thorough clean of the entire enclosure. If you use a cleaning solution with bleach or other toxic chemicals be sure to rinse thoroughly with water to remove all traces of the bleach, or toxic chemicals. I would recommend using an organic cleaner that wouldn't be harmful to the snake. Once dry you can add fresh substrate and refurnish the enclosure so you may put your ball python back.

## Mites

Ball pythons can sometimes contract mites from being around other ball pythons infected with mites, being outdoors, or being in an enclosure that has not been cleaned or treated for mites. If left unattended this can be really bad for the health of your ball python. If you notice your ball python has mites seek treatment as soon as possible. If you need assistance on how to remove mites check out this article for how to treat them:

## Health

If your ball python is healthy they should be active and alert, have clear eyes (other than when they are shedding), eats regularly, healthy skin, has perfect sheds, and free of mites.

Some red flags that something is wrong: unusually frequent or infrequent shedding, regurgitation, vomiting, lethargic in activity, reluctant to eat, abnormal feces, bumps or spots on skin, issues breathing, difficulty shedding, white substance in mouth. If you notice any of these prolonged issues, or a combination of issues please consult a veterinarian.

## Temperament & Behavior

Ball pythons are relatively slow, which makes them great for beginners. If they are stressed out or scared it is common for them to curl into a ball. If they show signs of stress it's best to leave them alone for a few days. But that doesn't mean if your ball python is always in its hide that it's always stressed or scared. Happy balls just love their hides. But when they aren't in a ball they are curious nomads ready to scope out the surroundings.

Personally, think ball pythons are super cute too. Their head shape is very puppy dog like and they are always startled when their snoot meets a foreign object.

Babies can be a bit nippy, but most of them grow out of it. The vast majority of ball pythons are not aggressive and don't strike. You may get bit if you've been handling an animal before you handle a ball python, it's possible they mistake the smell of your hands for food. They could potentially be nippy during shed or when they have laid a clutch of eggs.



Overall they are fantastic pets and my personal favorite. I consider them pretty low maintenance and they are very docile and easy to handle for a beginner. Their adult size is easy to manage, and they are just so darn cute. Look at that snoot. So boopable.

## Discover Snakes Rating

87

### Ease of care:



### Behavior:



### Husbandry:



### Trade:



### Risk to human:



This mean you won't die from a ball python :)