

# Ball Python Care Sheet

*The Ultimate Guide to Ball Python Care: Tips from BHB Reptiles*

Ball pythons are great companions for keepers of any skill level. They are very easy to care for species of snakes and come in TON OF beautiful colors and patterns!

BHB Reptiles has specialized in keeping and breeding Ball pythons since 1989 and we have developed this care sheet to help you feel confident about keeping your pet Ball pythons happy and healthy.

If you have any questions that you are unable to find on this care sheet, give us a call at 586-884-6646 and we are happy to answer them.

## Basic Ball Python Information

Common Name: Ball python or Royal python

Scientific Name: Python regius

Native Habitat: Western and Central Africa

Lifespan: With proper care, they can live between 20-40 years old.

Size: What is the size of a Ball python? Ball python males and females can grow anywhere from 3-6ft in length. Females are much larger in girth (in circumference) than males, so females do appear larger.

Expert Level: Great for beginners of all ages.

Temperament: Baby Ball pythons are normally very shy and as they get older Ball pythons will become more engaging and curious.

Handling: Do Ball Pythons enjoy being handled? For the most part yes: however, a small percentage may not be used to handling or just not like it. Make sure to continue to handle your Ball python on a regular basis so they become used to human interaction. If you are too nervous to hold your feisty Ball python, I would recommend wearing a pair of gardening gloves 🧤 works like a charm.

---

## HERE'S WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO CARE FOR YOUR NEW BALL PYTHON(S):

### What You Will Need For Your Ball Python's Enclosure:

**Terrarium Size:** There are many different ways to keep a Ball python. The most popular way is to keep your baby Ball python in a 15-20 gallon terrarium. If you are looking to become a breeder, look into purchasing a rack system. Rack systems are the best way to keep medium to large collections of Ball pythons where you can connect Flexwatt heat tape to share heat. \*\*\* In our opinion, baby Ball pythons will feel safer if you start them in an enclosure smaller than 25 gallons. Then, as your Ball python grows, go ahead and increase the size of their enclosure. \*\*\*

**Go BioActive!** A really cool thing to do for your Ball Python is to create a Bioactive Vivarium which includes creating a natural living space with plants, substrate and living organisms that act like a cleanup crew in the enclosure.

**Housing Multiple Ball Pythons:** Do not cohabit your Ball Pythons. Yes, some people do successfully cohabit their snakes, but it is not a good ideal at all. Your Ball pythons can become stressed out or injured. The only time you should have two snakes together is during breeding.

**Water Dish:** Water is very important for your Ball python and should be in their enclosure at all times. Make sure to NOT use distilled water for your reptile. If you do not know if your tap water is safe, we would suggest using bottle water like spring water. Also, you can use the product: "ReptiSafe® 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."

**Substrate:** Do not use sand or cedar substrate.

**Safe options:** Reptile Prime, Repti Bark and Newspaper/Paper Towel .I am really happy that we have had such positive feedback about our Reptile Prime substrate and I can honestly say it is one of the best substrates on the market to use for Ball pythons. If you are interested in purchasing a bag, please go to [ReptilePrime.com](http://ReptilePrime.com) to place your order. The substrate is also available on Amazon Prime. Canadian customers are not able to purchase thru the website, but they can purchase thru Amazon Prime.

**Hides:** It is best if you have two hides, one on the hot side and one on the cool side. Your Ball python will be able to comfortably regulate their temperature having a hide on both sides.

**Hygrometer:** I am always surprised how many keepers opt out of purchasing this very important tool for keeping most reptiles. A hygrometer is a very inexpensive piece of equipment that allows you to measure the humidity in your reptile's enclosure.

**Thermometer:** In order to make sure that your temperatures are correct in your Ball python's enclosure, we believe it is a MUST to make sure to purchase at LEAST one. We highly recommend purchasing two so that you are able to measure the temps on both the hot and cool sides. There are many options on the market. Shop around to see where the best deals are. You can also purchase a Digital Infrared thermometer that reads the temperature instantly.

**Heating Source:** Heating mat (under the tank or side), heat tape, ceramic heat emitters or a basking light. UVB light is not required. The easiest and most efficient way to keep a single Ball python is with a basking light or under the tank heating mat. This can be easily purchased online. For larger groups in a rack system, Flexwatt heat tape is a great choice. You can find this either online or at a hardware store. Do you not use heat rocks in your Ball python's enclosure as your python could get burned.

---

## Setting Up The Correct Temperature and Humidity For Your Pet Ball Python

**Temperature:** Hot side should be between 85-91°F and should not exceed 93°F as it can begin to kill calories in your Ball python. Cool side should be about 80°F.

**Humidity:** Ball pythons on average need to have about 60% humidity in their enclosure. Babies sometimes need a little bit higher. My personal tip is that if your Ball python has problems shedding you may need to raise your humidity slightly. Just a few ways to increase humidity: dampen

bedding with a spray bottle, larger water dish. cover the top 75% with a towel, place a humidifier in the same room, place a waterfall feature in the enclosure and add live plants. Keep in mind if you live in an area that gets cold and dry in the winter, it might be next to impossible to keep the humidity high. Try your best to keep it as close to 60% as possible and refer to the shedding section if you need tips about stuck shed.

---

## **My Ball Python Is Shedding Their Skin, Now What? How To Care For Your Ball Python**

### *Why is my Ball python shedding their skin?*

Ball pythons will shed their skin multiple times throughout their life because it allows them to grow. The younger the Ball Python is, the more often they will shed. When your Ball python is ready to shed, their scales will look dull and their eyes will start to look blue which is called Pre-ecdysis.

### *Is it normal for my Ball python not to eat when they are in shed?*

Sometimes during this period, your Ball python may refuse to eat which is perfectly normal.

How can I help my Ball python have a perfect shed? To help your Ball python have a full shed, you can slightly raise the humidity. When your Ball python sheds their skin, it is called Ecdysis. You will see your Ball python start to rub their little faces on decor, the terrarium, rocks or even you if you are holding them. If the humidity is correct and your python has no shedding issues you should have a beautiful complete shed.

### *What do I do if my Ball python has stuck shed?*

If your Ball python has stuck shed, first make sure that your humidity is high enough in their enclosure. There are a few ways to help with stuck shed using a Rubbermaid or Sterilite tub with holes.

- The first way is to soak your Ball python about an inch of (just warmer than room temperature) water for 30 minutes.
- The second way you can help is by dampening a paper towel with warm water, twisting out the excess water and placing them in a tub. Then, let your Ball python cruise around for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Once your Ball python has either soaked or cruised around the paper towel, put on a rubber thumb to gently remove the stuck shed.

If you notice that you are unable to remove an eye cap or a piece of shed that looks restricting, please go to a local breeder or vet to have it professionally removed.

---

## **Feeding My Pet Ball Python And How To Deal With Feeding Issues**

What we feed our baby Ball pythons: We normally start all of our baby Ball pythons on live small adult mice once a week. Once they have started feeding regularly, we begin to switch them over to frozen/thawed. You can keep your Ball python on live or switch to frozen/thawed whatever works best for you.

What to do when feeding your Ball python live mice : Please note if you feed live you need to supervise the feedings as live mice can injure your Ball python.

### *What size prey should you feed your pet Ball python?*

The size of the prey should be the same size as the largest part of their body. You should notice a small lump when they eat the prey item.

### *When should I switch my Ball python over to rats from mice?*

You can switch your Ball python over to rats whenever you feel like it. Normally, we wait until our Ball pythons are feeding on medium or large adult mice.

### *I need to feed my Ball python live, but I do not know where to find them?*

If you are feeding live, try to find a local breeder in your area who supplies rodents. You can check with local reptile Facebook groups or online classified websites. You could also check with a local pet store to see where they are getting their supply from.

### *I need to feed my Ball python frozen/thawed, but I do not know where to find them?*

If you are feeding frozen, there are a plethora of online companies that ship bulk mice and/or rats to your door. We do not recommend a particular company.

### *How to prepare frozen/thawed rodents for my Ball python?*

To prepare a frozen rodent, either thaw out overnight on your counter or place in warm water to defrost. DO NOT MICROWAVE YOUR RODENTS.

### *When can I handle my Ball python after I feed them?*

Typically, we suggest not handling your Ball python 24 hours before feeding and then 24-48 hours after they have taken a meal.

---

## **Why is my Ball python not eating?**

- *Your Ball Python May Be A Picky Feeder*
  - Ball pythons are known for being picky feeders, so do not immediately feel like you are doing something wrong if your Ball python does not wish to eat.
- *Your Ball Python Has Not Eaten Their First Meal*
  - If you have a newborn Ball python 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. NEVER FORCE FEED YOUR BALL PYTHON.
- *Your Ball Python Is Still Settling Into Their New Environment*
  - 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.
- *Your Ball Python Does Not Have The Correct Setup*
  - Double check to make sure that your temperatures and humidity are correct. Not having the correct temps and humidity can cause your Ball python to stop eating.

- *Your Ball Python Wants Something Different*
  - Try switching up your rodent or routine to improve your Ball python's chances of taking a meal:
  - try switching between live or frozen rodents
  - slightly warm a thawed rodent a little more in warm water
  - switching between rats and mice
  - try a smaller rodent
  - try feeding in the evening or right before bed
  - try feeding in a separate smaller feeding box.
- *Your Ball Python Is Being Offered Rodents Too Often*
  - Keep in mind that if your baby Ball python is refusing to eat, please keep your offerings between 1-2 weeks apart to keep your Ball python's feeding response strong.
- *Your Ball Python May Want Something Specific*
  - We have heard of some keepers offering a different color mouse, scenting the mouse and braining a frozen/thawed mouse. I haven't heard about a ton of keepers having luck with those methods, but it is always worth a try.
- *My Ball Python Has Regurgitated, Now What?*
  - Ball pythons are extremely sensitive to regurgitation. If for whatever reason your Ball python regurgitates, make sure to wait about a 1.5 weeks before feeding again and give smaller meals for about a month before offering a regular meal. If your Ball python regurgitates a second time, please visit a vet.

---

### **Ball Python Health Concerns To Watch Out For.**

#### **Scale Rot:**

If you notice that your Ball python has a rash or blisters this could be scale rot. Scale rot is typically due to the humidity being way too high. First, place your Ball python into a completely dry environment and we would suggest using a paper towel as a substrate as you can change it frequently to keep the enclosure dry.

Wait a day or two before placing a water dish back into their enclosure. Once you place a water dish back into the enclosure, if you notice that the water dish has spilled onto the paper towel please change it. Make sure to clean up immediately if your snake has urinated or defecated. Finally, visit the vet in order to start a course of antibiotics to help heal your snake.

#### **Respiratory Infections (R.Is):**

If your Ball python has signs of Respiratory infection, please visit a vet to diagnose your snake and receive antibiotics to treat the infection. The sooner that you go to the vet the faster the healing time will be. Also, make the following adjustments to their enclosure, keep the hot side at 92°F and the humidity around 90%. A hot and humid environment will help the healing process.

For minor RI, there is some success with using F10 veterinary disinfectant to nebulize your snakes with. I would only suggest doing this along with having a vet check out your python. If your Ball python has a bad respiratory infection, ask your vet if they feel that they need to be off food for a period of time.

### **Mite Prevention, Symptoms and Treatment**

Anytime you bring a reptile in your home or collection, make sure that you quarantine them away from other reptiles. There is a product called Provent-A-Mite that you can spray into their enclosure which will really do a great job.

If your Ball python is hanging out in their water dish a lot and you see black specks floating around in the water, you may have a snake with mites. Also, you can double check their scales to see if there are any raised scales with mites hiding.

If you find that your Ball python has mites, make sure to bathe your Ball python in warm water about an inch deep. While your Ball python is bathing, completely disinfect their enclosure. In my opinion, I would get a separate Rubbermaid/Sterilite tub or terrarium and spray down with Provent-A-Mite.

Let the enclosure completely air dry and use a paper towel as a substrate with nothing else in the enclosure. After a day or two place the water dish back into the enclosure. You will need to continue to bathe your Ball python, disinfecting your enclosure and use Provent-A-Mite for about a month or so.

---

\*\*\*Did I forget something or is there some else you feel I should include on this care sheet? Please feel free to email me at [Stephanie@BHBReptiles.com](mailto:Stephanie@BHBReptiles.com)\*\*\*\*

### **WHEN YOU ORDER A BALL PYTHON(S) FROM BHB REPTILES**

Once you receive your Ball Python(s), please inspect your box and the python. If there are any problems, please call us during business hours or email us during non-business hours for the fastest service. If there are no issues, please place your python directly into their new home and offer water. Wait to offer food until 5-7 days in order to allow their stomach to settle from shipping. Finally, we would recommend extremely light handling or no handling the first week they arrive so that they can become acclimated to their new environment. Most of all, enjoy your new companion(s).

BY: STEPHANIE KENT - BHB REPTILES