

## Burmese Python (Molurus Bivittatus)

### General Information

The Burmese Python is native throughout Southeast Asia including Burma and Indonesia. It is a giant and truly magnificent snake. As such, it is unlikely that many people reading this fact sheet would actually be in a position to keep one in captivity. Additionally, Burmese Pythons are among several other species said to be a threatened and are listed as such with the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

It is true to say that it is not unusual to see sale advertisements for Burmese both through the pet trade and now more frequently than ever, from private sellers. The fact that so many are on sale through private individuals could perhaps give you a clue that there are definite difficulties faced by amateurs who keep these animals.



Many buy them as hatchlings and consequently they are quite small in size. As the animal grows, there is a recognition that coping with a snake such as the Burmese is far more difficult and potentially dangerous than was ever contemplated. There is then a further stark realisation that it is no easy task to re-home the animal, if and when

it becomes too demanding to handle. Even zoos and animal parks are rarely an option in respect of re-homing. Many do not keep snakes of any description, or if snakes are kept, they already have what they want and do not need more. There is a limit to the number of giant snakes a zoo or animal park wants or needs!

## Brief overview of needs

If you are insistent on keeping a Burmese, then there are a few things that may be of interest and are useful to know. Be aware that Boidae, (Pythons and Boas), can suffer from a particularly serious virus, Inclusion Body Disease (IBD). This virus is almost without exception, fatal to Pythons. This identifies the need to use stringent quarantine procedures and keep new snakes away from your existing collection if you have one. You will also need to follow a strict hand washing routine before handling your other animals. That said, you should do that as a matter of course. Remember also that the virus is airborne! The virus can take many months before it reveals itself.

Have you got a suitable enclosure ready for the snake? It will obviously have to be very strong, escape proof and **VERY LARGE**. Burmese Pythons are equally at home on the ground or in trees. They are also excellent swimmers. No surprises then that even in captivity, the need for a tree branch for it to climb and possibly water for it to soak, particularly at sloughing time, are necessities. Bearing in mind the size that they grow and the corresponding size of 'equipment' that would be required, how many people can afford to give up a room of the house to their Burmese? If you look around at commercially available accommodation, it will soon become apparent that at some time in the near future, you will be unable to purchase a ready made enclosure that is anywhere near large enough. Clearly, this can mean only one thing...you will need to either build one yourself or have one built for you. Access for you into the enclosure will always be an issue, due to the need to clean out the accommodation.

You will need also to think about the feeding of your animal. Relate that advice to an animal the size of a Burmese Python and you might get an idea of some problems that could



arise with this particular exercise. The Burmese Python is also known to overfeed if you allow it to and this is a practice that you must avoid.

## Finally

The problems keeping and raising snakes of this size are many and varied. Some of the observations made above are testament to this, but it is by far a complete list of the difficulties that might exist. The most important thing to remember is the sheer power of one of these animals and the danger that it can present. There is no doubt that we would not recommend for anyone to keep one of these snakes without several years experience of snake keeping and handling. There are numerous stories regarding deaths attributable to so called 'giant' snakes. Some of the stories are undoubtedly exaggerated. Nonetheless, in fairness, some are absolutely true and in a number of the incidents, the animals concerned were considered by the owners to be 'pets'!

Please keep in mind; these are wild animals and must be treated with **extreme caution** and the **utmost respect**. Our unequivocal advice to the vast majority of would be Burmese Python owners is...**LEAVE THEM TO THE EXPERTS!**