

Royal Python (Python Regius)

General Information

The Royal Python, (also known as the Ball Python), is a native of central and western Africa. These snakes can be found on sale through both the pet trade and also private sellers. They are a good manageable size, normally achieving up to four feet in length, only very occasionally will they be larger.

Brief overview of needs

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 and that it can be several months before it reveals itself.



You will need a good strong, escape proof enclosure for your animal. As with all snakes, Royals can find their way out of extremely tight and confined spaces and so escape is a real possibility. Royal Pythons are equally at home on the ground or in trees, so even in captivity you will want a tree branch included. This means that ideally, the enclosure would be of reasonable height. Once again, as with many large snakes, it is better to buy or build the enclosure in readiness for the eventual full size of the animal. Other than that, the only other absolute necessities are a water bowl heavy enough that it is not easily tipped over and very important, as is the need for all snakes; a 'hide box' large enough for it to disappear for quite long periods.

You will need also to think about the feeding of your animal. It is sometimes said that Royal Pythons may not feed for some considerable time and that this is a trait of the species. **It is not!** This is not healthy and cannot be a reason for selecting this species. Your snake should feed normally and though it is known that some Royals may be difficult feeders at times, this must be addressed and not accepted as the norm.

The correct temperature is essential to keeping your animal healthy. The air temperature in the accommodation must remain between 80-85F (27-29 C) in the daytime. At night, the air temperature may be allowed to drop but no lower than 73-



75F (23-24 C).

Make a thermal gradient in the enclosure (warmer at one end than at the other.) And don't guess at temperatures; use a thermometer!

Finally

Picking up and handling newly purchased snakes

is very important. By all means allow it a day or two to settle in to its new enclosure, but don't leave it any longer than that. Snakes will probably move away from you and may even threaten by hissing at you or maybe lashing it's tail. Be persistent, this is normally just a bluff. Regular handling is needed for the animal to get used to being picked up and moved. Just be gentle and avoid sudden movements. Most snakes will take exception to being handled within a couple of days of feeding. Regurgitation is the distinct possibility under these circumstances. Royal Pythons are quite even-tempered animals and can be a good addition to any collection.