

REPTILIA

We Specialize in Small Animals and Reptiles



Reptilia Marketing PTY(LTD)

107 Piet Retief Blvd Vanderbijlpark

 **016 982 3064**

 **reptiliavdbp@gmail.com**

 **@Reptilia.co.za**

 **www.reptilia.co.za**

BOA CONSTRICTOR CARE

The Common or Red-tailed Boa (*Boa constrictor constrictor*) originates from the rainforests of Southern America, where it can be found in a variety of places from the forest floor to trees, and even in water at times. Anyone thinking of owning a boa should carefully consider the size of an adult snake, and consider the space requirements of owning such a snake, which can grow at least 2-3m in length, and can live for 20-30 years in captivity.

HOUSING

- As large a vivarium or purpose-built enclosure as possible should be provided to enable room for exercise, and a thermal gradient to be created along the length of the tank (hot to cold). Wooden or fiberglass vivarium will provide the snake with some visual security and ventilation can be provided at snake level.
- Good ventilation is required, and additional ventilation holes may need to be created.
- Hides are required to provide some security. Artificial plants, cardboard boxes, plant pots, logs or commercially available hides can be used. They should be placed both at the warm and cooler ends of the tank.
- Substrates suitable for housing snakes include fine reptile sand, kenaf, fine silica stones, Astroturf, carpets and some of the commercially available substrates. It is important that the substrates either cannot be swallowed, or if they are, do not cause blockages as this can prove fatal. Wood chip-based or corncob substrates should never be used for this reason.
- The vivarium should be cleaned out at least once a week with F10 disinfectant or similar disinfectant and spot cleaned daily to help prevent diseases.

TEMPERATURES AND HUMIDITY

- Reptiles are ectothermic, so a heat source is required.
- Temperatures should be measured with a maximum/minimum thermometer. During the cold winter months careful checking is required to ensure the heat sources are keeping the tank sufficiently warm. Heat sources should be guarded to prevent thermal burns.
- Humidity should be checked with a hygrometer and kept moderately high by spraying or fogging the enclosure at regular intervals.

- Temperatures must be measured to ensure the tank is not overheating especially in a small vivarium. The cool end should be maintained at 27°C, and the warm end should be maintained at 35°C and not exceed 37°C.
- Belly heat can be provided with a heat mat or heating pad (below the substrate or AstroTurf). If heat mat or heating pad does not supply sufficient heat an additional heat source must be added such as a Heat Emitter, Infrared Heat Lamp or a Moon Lamp. This should be set on a thermostat so that the overnight temperature does not drop below 27°C.

COMPANIONS

- In general, the happiest snake is the solitary snake.

LIGHTING

- Despite being crepuscular species (active at dawn and dusk), boa constrictors appear to benefit from UVB light.
- A low percentage UV light can be recommended. This will need to be on all day for 8 hours and at an appropriate distance from the snake as recommended by the manufacturer. A small branch or rock can be placed below the basking site (please ask for further information on UV light in reptiles).
- All UVB bulbs should be checked regularly for their UV output and should be changed at least every 10-12 months.

WHAT TO FEED

- Boa constrictors are carnivores and their main diet consists of mice and rat pinkies or fuzzies for hatchlings. As the snake grows, so will the frequency and amount of food given and an increase in prey size, from pinkie mice to larger prey such as rats should be made. Most snakes prefer live feed as part of their hunting instinct. If frozen food is preferred, it should be defrosted and warmed to blood temperature 37°C prior to feeding. Handling should be avoided after feeding as to prevent the snakes from regurgitating.
- Water should always be available, and a container is required which will allow the snake to submerge completely. This should be changed daily.

SALMONELLA

- All reptiles can potentially carry Salmonella.
- However, it is rarely a cause of illness in reptiles and treatment is not required.
- It can be transmitted to people (especially young children or those who are immuno-compromised) so good hygiene after handling the reptile is important. Generally washing your hands in soap is sufficient. There are commercially available disinfectants that can be used as an alternative.

ANNUAL HEALTH CHECKS

We recommend annual health checks every year for pet reptiles as medical problems are more easily treated if detected at an early stage.