

Boa Constrictor

The Red tailed boa is among the most common and well known species of snakes kept as pets. The common name Red tailed boa refers to one of many types of boas found throughout Central and South America. These snakes can grow to a large but manageable size and are recommended only for keepers willing to provide adequate space for adults. The friendly demeanor and attractive coloration have made the Red tailed boa one of the most sought after snakes in the hobby. These tropical snakes are commonly bred in captivity and we recommend purchasing captive bred animals only.

- **Common Name:** Red Tail Boa
- **Scientific Name:** *Boa constrictor*
- **Distribution:** Central and South America
- **Size:** 3-10'
- **Life Span:** 15-25 years

Habitat

- Neonates to juveniles (under 3') can be housed in a 20-40 gallon terrarium.
- 40-60 gallon terrariums are an excellent choice for young boas.
- Adult Boas will need an enclosure that is no shorter than half the length of the snake. There are several cages commercially made to house adult boas. Minimal cage size for adults should be 4' x 2' x 1'.
- A secure, lockable sliding-screen lid is essential for safely housing these snakes.

Heating

- Daytime Terrarium Temperature 80-85°F
- Basking Temperature 85-92°F
- Nighttime Terrarium Temperature 72-78°F

- Create a thermal gradient in your snake enclosure by placing a heat lamp and an Under Tank Heater on one side of the terrarium. A daylight reptile bulb is a good choice for heating snake enclosures. By placing the heating elements on one side of the cage, you will naturally provide the proper thermal gradient.
- Any thermometer will help you keep a close eye on terrarium temperatures.
- An Under Tank Heater is essential to provide belly heat to your snake while it digests a meal.

Lighting

- Snakes typically do not require UVB to meet their vitamin D requirements. However, many snakes receive UVB and sunlight in their natural habitat and there is new evidence that they benefit from UVB lighting in captivity.
- UVB fluorescent lamps can be used to illuminate your terrarium and create a natural day/night photoperiod.

Substrates

- Boa Constrictors will do best on aspen snake bedding, cypress mulch, cocoanut fiber or orchid bark. We recommend a substrate layer of 2.5-3" in depth.
- Provide moistened sphagnum moss in a reptile shelter to create a humidity chamber. This chamber will help your snake shed its skin as it grows.
- Reptile carpet can be used as a safe, environmentally friendly and easy-to clean substrate.

Nutrition

- Boa Constrictors can be fed exclusively mice and rats throughout their lives. Rodents provide snakes with the needed calcium and vitamins.
- Have fresh water available at all times. Water conditioners are a good choice for removing Chlorine and Chloramines from tap water.
- Remember to choose a large enough water bowl that your snake can fully submerge itself if it wants to.
- When choosing the proper sized food item for your snake select a mouse/rat that is the same size, or slightly bigger than the girth of your snake.
 - **Young:** Will eat 1-2 hopper mice per week.
 - **Juveniles:** Will eat 1-2 adult mice or rat pups per week.
 - **Adults:** Will eat 1-2 appropriately sized rats per week. Large adults may need larger food items such as rabbits, Guinea pigs, or similar sized food.

Tips

- When selecting a Boa Constrictor of any age or size, we recommend purchasing Captive Born and Bred animals. Captive Born Boa Constrictors fare better in captivity and have fewer problems associated with parasites and disease. Captive born Boa Constrictors also tend to be more docile and have fewer problems feeding.
- Purchase a quality book on the care and husbandry of these animals before bringing any animal home.