

Herpetoculture House

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Geckos in Fact or Fiction

Ball Python Care



Western Banded Geckos

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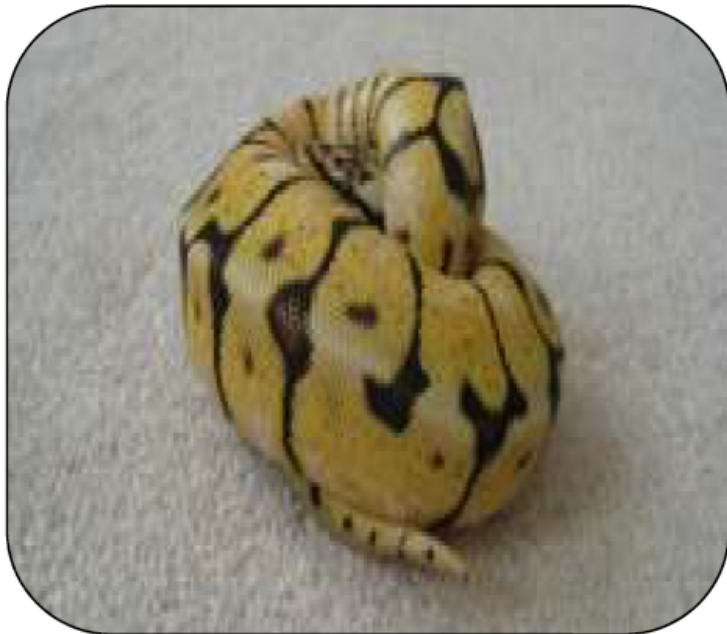
Ball Python Care

By: Ricky Melamed

<http://rickysreptileenclosures.com/>

With so many pets to choose from these days, it's no surprise that snakes have become some of the most popular pets in North America, particularly the Ball Python. Ball Pythons have been garnering much deserved attention over the past decade because of the rising number of amazing colour morphs available readily on the Internet. With millions of these snakes changing hands every year, there has become a growing need for information on how to properly care for them. The Internet has provided an avenue for sharing information with consumers, but not all information provided is accurate.

Photo By: Ricky Melamed



Ball Python care sheets and videos can be found on many sites throughout the web in many languages, allowing consumers around the world the

chance to get to know Ball Pythons before they actually go to the store or breeder to purchase their new pet. However, with the ease of duplicating information, the Ball Python has been fighting a losing battle for nearly twenty years. The care sheets found on most sites and the information given to many consumers by pet store clerks is incorrect, resulting in cold, dry and unhealthy Ball Pythons by the millions. Let's discuss three of the major issues today that need to be corrected. All three issues related to the keeping of Ball Pythons are connected intimately to one another.

Keeping a Ball Python in a fish tank is the most common error suggested. Although fish tanks are readily available at almost any pet store across the world, they are not the correct enclosure for a Ball Python. Keeping this exotic snake requires more than space - it requires very specific heat and humidity levels that are nearly impossible to obtain within a fish tank. The correct Ball Python enclosure should be made of a non-porous material so it can be properly cleaned. It should also have a closed top and an access door on the front. It is important that the enclosure be designed properly so that the heat and humidity which I am going to discuss next will be retained properly.

Ball Pythons were plucked from their homes in western central Africa many years ago

Photo By: Ricky Melamed



and have been bred in captivity ever since. Although these captive bred snakes have never felt the warm earth of 'home', they still require the same climate. Warmth is the second greatest lack in Ball Python care. Along with the fish tank, most consumers will find that heat lamps are highly recommended by stores and care sheets. These popular reptile heat sources are terrific for providing both heat and light for many types of reptiles ranging from lizards to various species of snakes. Although they are the most popular source of heat, these lamps and domes create the wrong environment for a Ball Python. Ball Pythons do not naturally bask on logs or rocks like many other snakes when heating their bodies. Ball Pythons do require heat, since they are cold blooded animals, but they require a different type of heat. Ball Pythons require an under tank heater (UTH). A UTH is available in the form of a tape, pad or cable and is very easy to install under the enclosure. Any UTH should be regulated using a thermostat to make sure it doesn't exceed the recommended temperature and burn your Ball Python. In order for your Ball Python to behave in a stress free and natural way it must hide under branches or logs for the better part

of the day, only coming out during the night. While hiding, the Ball Python requires heat on its belly, which mimics the warm African earth. Although the heat on the floor of the enclosure is critical, it is also very important that the inside of the enclosure remain warm. If you were convinced either online or in a store to keep your Ball Python in a fish tank, you are likely doing one of two things. The first is that you are using a heat lamp, providing a wonderfully warm ambient temperature in the enclosure, leaving your Ball Python cold inside its hiding place, forcing it to come out during the day. The other possibility is that you have used the correct under tank heater, so your snake is comfortably warm during the day but cannot come out of the cave at night because the ambient air temperature is much too cold. The inherent issue with fish tanks is that the top of a fish tank is wide open allowing the warm air to escape into the room, leaving your Ball Python cold and stressed out about how to remain warm. Ball Pythons require temperatures in excess of 90 degrees Fahrenheit in order to digest food properly, among many other daily bodily functions.



Photo By: Ricky Melamed

Keeping your Ball Python in a Ball Python enclosure will allow the air within the enclosure to remain warm, so your snake can behave appropriately without the need to worry about where and how it is going to heat up.

Finally, if you have ever walked through a hot jungle you would immediately notice that the air is humid and thick. Ball Pythons who live in fish tanks will be dry, and this is very unhealthy for a tropical snake. The air within the enclosure must be warm, but also it must be humid. In fact, the regular daily relative humidity within a Ball Python enclosure must not be lower than 50%. Ball Pythons require moisture just as much as heat and can fall very ill if the air is too dry.

The most common problem for Ball Python owners is skin stuck on the bodies and eyes of their snakes after a shed cycle. There is much debate on how to remove the skin that is stuck on a Ball Python after a poor shed. The solution lies not in the answer, but in the question. Why is the skin stuck on your Ball Python? Ninety-nine% of the time the answer to this question is low humidity. Maintaining humidity between 50% and 70% within a fish tank would require the addition of moisture several times a day, seven days a week. Since spraying down the substrate in the enclosure so many times a day is impractical, most owners allow their Ball Pythons to suffer in a dry and unforgiving environment. Moving a Ball Python from a dry fish tank to a Ball Python enclosure will be the greatest day for your Ball Python. We urge owners to think of the move as a lifetime investment for your snake's health. Obtaining humidity at 50% within a Ball Python enclosure is as easy as spraying down the enclosure once every

few days, less than 20% of the work required to maintain the same humidity in a fish tank.

Ball Pythons are shy, docile creatures. With so many Ball Pythons in North America it has become the responsibility of owners to make sure that these silent creatures get the care they deserve. Although snakes are not able to tell you that they are suffering, they do suffer in huge numbers due to improper care. Ball Pythons are easy to maintain and care for, as long as you remember the three cardinal rules: use the correct enclosure, heat source and maintain the proper humidity. Once you have created the correct environment for your snake it will shed its skin, eat its food and behave in a much more natural way. In fact, a less stressed out Ball Python will also become a much more docile and friendly snake. So please, ignore the incorrect information you find on the web, and make sure to be the voice for your snake. Ask the right questions, and search for the correct answers.

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