

Boas & Pythons (not Ball Pythons)

Boids - Includes all common ground and water dwelling species - not tree dwellers

CAGING: Bear in mind that the boids (pronounced BOW -ids) include the largest snakes in the world. A full-grown, sixteen foot (or longer), Burmese python can require two grown men to move it. Cage size should be proportional to the size of the animal; at least three-fourths the length of the snake, but not so large that the snake is lost in it. One snake per cage is advised. On aquariums, use fine mesh wire covers, with clips to hold it on. Be sure they are secure enough to hold the snake. Boids are very strong. On cages with sliding fronts, glass is better than Plexiglas, as it is cheaper and harder for the snake to push out of the track. For bedding, use paper towels, AstroTurf, or brown paper or newspaper (black & white only!), as they are cheap and easy to clean or replace. Avoid shavings and other loose materials; they may be swallowed, causing problems for your animal. Provide a hide box for your snake to make it feel more secure and reduce stress on the animal (which can cause illness).

WATER: Your snake should always have clean water, and, when possible, a dish large enough to soak in, especially when shedding.

TEMPERATURE: Boas do well at temperatures from 78-88 degrees F. Propagation and heating mats with thermostats are preferred heat sources, as they maintain a constant temperature. Heat rocks, heat lamps, and heat tape also work, but are not as efficient. Heating pads work well if placed under the cage. Heat only half of the cage to allow the snake an area to cool off if the heated area gets too hot. Check the temperature by placing a thermometer in the heated area. Don't overheat or chill your snake! They are very susceptible to respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia.

FOOD: Boids can be fed any type of rodent of the right size. Try to get your snake to eat dead food. This reduces the risk of injury to the snake, and sometimes results in a calmer snake. Some snakes will never adjust to dead food, but try it; most will adapt. Don't expect a newly acquired snake to eat right away. It may not be hungry, may need to adjust to its new home, or you may not be offering the food it's used to eating. It may take weeks before it eats for you. Don't panic, keep trying, and don't handle the snake more than necessary before it starts.

HEALTH & CLEANING: Mites are common on these snakes. To eliminate them, place a small piece of 'No-Pest' strip in a jar (with several holes in the lid) in the cage, and leave the jar for 2-3 days. Repeat, if necessary, in two weeks. Remove the water dish while the jar is in the cage. Cages must be kept clean to prevent mites, ticks, scale rot, and other problems. Anti-bacterial cleaning solutions are recommended. One ounce of bleach in ten ounces of water is one such solution. Rinse the cage with clean water after using any solution. Don't use Lysol, Lestoil or other such oil-based cleaners; they are deadly to reptiles. The cage substrate (bedding) must be kept dry, even for water dwellers, like anacondas. Though many boids like to soak in water, they must be able to dry off, or they will develop scale rot and blisters.

HANDLING: Most boids don't object to being handled two or three times a week. Some species, such as Anacondas and Reticulated Pythons, often bite when handled. Others, such as the Rosy Boa, will stop eating if handled too much. Don't handle any snake for 48 hours after feeding, or if it becomes ill or stops feeding, unless the cage needs cleaning. Keep handling to a minimum when your snake is getting ready to shed. The skin can be damaged easily during this time.

This Care Sheet was originally written by New England Herpetological Society. It can be found at www.neherp.com or www.AnimalCityInc.com

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