**YVCipedia REPTILE**

Bally Python Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

Ball pythons (*Python regius*), also known as **royal pythons**, are small-to-medium-bodied snakes native to sub-Saharan Africa’s grasslands and savannas. They’re named for their defensive behavior of curling tightly into a ball with their head protected in the center.

Ball pythons are among the **most popular pet snakes** because of their manageable adult size (generally **3–5 feet**), generally calm temperament, and beautiful natural and captive-bred color patterns. With proper care, they routinely live **20–30 years** in captivity—making them a long-term commitment for any keeper.

## **Housing & Environment**

Ball pythons are **terrestrial, crepuscular** snakes that need secure, appropriately sized enclosures with temperature gradients and multiple hiding spots.

For adults, an enclosure of at least **36×18×12 inches** (~40–50 gallons) is recommended, with larger enclosures (up to 4×2×2 ft) offering more enrichment opportunities. Glass terrariums, PVC enclosures, and rack systems can all work if properly heated, humidified, and secured.

Inside, provide **at least two secure hides** (one on the warm side and one on the cool side), plus climbing branches, cork bark, and décor to encourage exploration. Substrates should help maintain humidity without molding or causing impaction risk.

**Substrate options include:**

* Coconut husk/chip bedding
* Cypress mulch
* Paper towels or reptile carpet (easy to clean, lower humidity)
* Avoid dusty or aromatic wood shavings (e.g., pine, cedar).

**Key habitat considerations:**

* Escape-proof, well-ventilated enclosure
* Multiple hides for security
* Climbing opportunities
* Spot-cleaning of waste as needed; full substrate change monthly or as needed

## **Heating, Lighting & Humidity**

Ball pythons require **thermal gradients** so they can move between warmer and cooler zones to regulate their body temperature.

**Temperature guidelines:**

* **Warm side/basking area:** 88–92°F surface temperature
* **Cool side:** 75–80°F
* **Nighttime:** Can safely drop to ~72–75°F but avoid prolonged cold

Heating should come from **top-down sources** (ceramic heat emitters, heat lamps) or controlled under-tank heat pads on thermostats. Overhead radiant heat is especially effective in front-opening PVC enclosures. All heat sources **must** be thermostat-regulated to avoid burns.

**Lighting:**

* Ball pythons are nocturnal/crepuscular and **do not require UVB** to survive, but **low-level UVB (2–5%)** is considered beneficial for overall health.
* Provide a **12-hour day/night cycle** with ambient or overhead lighting.

**Humidity:**

* Maintain **50–70%**, with occasional peaks during shedding (up to ~80%).
* Achieved with proper substrate, misting, large water bowls, and partial enclosure coverage.
* Digital hygrometers help monitor accurately.

## **Water & Hydration**

Ball pythons need access to a **large, stable water bowl** big enough to allow soaking.

* Change water **at least weekly** or immediately if soiled.
* Clean with mild reptile-safe disinfectant.
* Soaking can aid in hydration and support healthy shedding cycles.

Proper humidity and hydration are key to **avoiding incomplete sheds** or dysecdysis.

## **Diet & Feeding**

Ball pythons are **obligate carnivores**, feeding on whole prey. In captivity, they thrive on appropriately sized frozen-thawed rodents.

**General feeding guidelines:**

* Prey should be no wider than the widest part of the snake.
* **Hatchlings/juveniles:** Every 5–7 days
* **Adults:** Every 10–14 days
* Always thaw prey thoroughly and warm slightly (never feed frozen).
* Feeding live prey is **not recommended** due to risk of injury.

Ball pythons are **notorious for fasting**, especially during breeding season or environmental changes. Occasional short-term fasting can be normal but should be discussed with your vet if prolonged or associated with weight loss.

**Supplements:**

* Not needed for whole-prey diets.
* Hydration and environmental factors are more critical than vitamins or powders.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Schedule an **initial veterinary exam** soon after acquisition and **annual wellness checkups**.

**Common health concerns include:**

* **Respiratory infections** from low temperatures or high humidity.
* **Mouth rot (stomatitis)** with oral swelling or pus.
* **Parasites**, both internal (worms) and external (mites).
* **Shedding issues** from improper humidity.
* **Obesity** from overfeeding.

**Signs of illness:**

* Wheezing, clicking, open-mouth breathing
* Swelling or pus in the mouth
* Refusal to eat for extended periods with weight loss
* Stuck shed, especially on eyes
* Lethargy, uncoordinated movements

Prompt veterinary evaluation is critical to catch issues early and prevent complications.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Ball pythons are generally **calm, slow-moving, and tolerant of gentle handling**.

* Always support the **entire body**, especially the head and midsection.
* Avoid sudden movements or grabbing from above.
* Short, regular sessions help build trust.
* Never handle immediately after feeding (wait 48–72 hours to prevent regurgitation).

They are crepuscular and may be more active at dusk and dawn. Some individuals are shy and will ball up or hide when stressed—that’s normal defensive behavior.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Ball pythons benefit from **secure, enriched environments**.

* Multiple hides on warm and cool sides reduce stress.
* Branches, cork bark, and climbing décor allow exploration.
* Large water bowls provide humidity and soaking.
* Rearranging décor periodically stimulates natural curiosity.

A well-designed enclosure supports mental well-being as much as physical health.

## **Fun Facts & FAQs**

* Named for their **habit of curling into a tight ball** when threatened.
* Naturally found in **Africa’s savannas and grasslands**, hiding in burrows.
* Capable of **going off food for months** in the wild, especially during breeding or dry seasons.
* Often bred for **dozens of color and pattern morphs** in captivity.
* Can live **20–30+ years**, making them a serious long-term commitment.

### **Supplies Checklist**

* Escape-proof enclosure (≥40–50 gallons for adults)
* Substrate for humidity retention (coconut husk, cypress mulch)
* Multiple hides (warm and cool side)
* Large, sturdy water dish
* Climbing branches, cork bark
* Ceramic heat emitter or basking bulb with thermostat
* Optional low-level UVB lighting
* Digital thermometers and hygrometer
* Feeding tongs and cleaning supplies
* Frozen-thawed feeder rodents
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits

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