## **YVCipedia REPTILE**

Burmese Python Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The **Burmese python (*Python bivittatus*)** is one of the **largest snake species in the world**, native to Southeast Asia’s tropical forests, grasslands, and marshes. They’re known for their **massive size, muscular build, calm disposition when socialized, and beautiful patterns**, including both classic “normal” coloration and popular albino morphs.

Despite their often-docile nature, Burmese pythons are **powerful, very large snakes** that can grow **12–18+ feet long** and weigh over **100 pounds**. They require **extensive space, advanced husbandry, and careful handling planning**, making them appropriate only for **dedicated, experienced keepers** prepared for lifelong, large-scale care.

Captive-bred Burmese pythons can live **20–30+ years** with excellent husbandry.

## **Housing & Environment**

Burmese pythons require **very large, secure enclosures** to allow natural behaviors and accommodate their size.

**Minimum enclosure size (adults):**

* **8–12 feet long × 4–6 feet wide × 4–6 feet tall**
* Larger is always better—many keepers dedicate entire rooms or custom-built enclosures

**Key enclosure features:**

* Escape-proof design with locking doors or lids (strong, heavy snakes)
* Multiple large hides for security (warm and cool sides)
* Sturdy climbing branches or low shelves (especially for juveniles)
* Easy-to-clean flooring or substrate
* Durable materials that can handle frequent cleaning and high humidity

**Recommended substrates:**

* Sealed flooring (for large, custom enclosures)
* Cypress mulch or coconut husk for humidity retention
* Newspaper or paper-based bedding for easy cleaning
* Avoid cedar or pine shavings (toxic oils)

**Cleaning guidelines:**

* Spot-clean feces and urates promptly
* Full substrate changes and thorough disinfection monthly or more often as needed

## **Heating & Lighting**

Burmese pythons are **ectothermic** and require strong temperature gradients to maintain healthy digestion and metabolism.

**Temperature gradient:**

* **Basking spot:** 88–92°F
* **Ambient daytime:** 78–85°F
* **Cooler areas:** ~75–78°F
* **Nighttime:** Can drop safely to ~70–75°F

**Heating:**

* Overhead ceramic heat emitters or halogen basking bulbs (on dimmers or thermostats)
* Under-tank heat mats for belly heat if using appropriate substrates
* Avoid heat rocks (burn risk)
* All heating should be **thermostat-controlled** to prevent overheating

**Lighting:**

* Burmese pythons do not require UVB lighting, but **low-level UVB (2–5%) may offer health benefits**
* Provide a **12-hour light/dark cycle** with timers to simulate natural rhythms

## **Humidity**

Burmese pythons thrive with **moderate to high humidity**, generally **50–70%**.

**Humidity management tips:**

* Light to moderate misting as needed
* Large water basin can help maintain ambient humidity
* Provide a **humid hide** with damp moss, especially for shedding cycles
* Digital hygrometer recommended for accurate monitoring

Proper humidity is **essential** to support healthy skin and shedding.

## **Water & Hydration**

Fresh, clean water should always be available in a **large, sturdy basin**.

**Water care guidelines:**

* Choose a container large enough for partial or full-body soaking (many will soak regularly)
* Change water daily or if soiled
* Clean and disinfect the water basin weekly or more often as needed
* Monitor for bacterial growth in standing water

Water soaking helps with **hydration, thermoregulation, and healthy shedding**.

## **Diet & Feeding**

Burmese pythons are **strict carnivores** that feed on appropriately sized whole prey.

**Feeding guidelines:**

* Prey size ≈ 1–1.5× the widest part of the snake’s body
* Juveniles: Feed every 7–10 days
* Adults: Feed every 2–4 weeks depending on size, age, and metabolism
* Typical prey includes rats, rabbits, or poultry (appropriate to snake size)

**Feeding tips:**

* Always use **appropriately thawed frozen prey**—live prey can injure the snake
* Feed in the enclosure or in a separate tub depending on temperament and space
* Avoid handling for **48–72 hours post-feeding** to prevent regurgitation
* Monitor body condition to avoid obesity—Burmese pythons are prone to overeating if overfed

## **Behavior & Handling**

Burmese pythons are **generally calm and curious** when well socialized, but they are **very strong** and require respect and planning.

**Handling recommendations:**

* Always support the full body and heavy midsection
* Never handle alone for adult snakes—**use a second person for safety**
* Approach calmly, avoiding sudden movements
* Start with short, positive sessions and build trust
* Avoid handling right after feeding or during shedding cycles

Because of their size and strength, **safe handling protocols are essential**—even tame individuals can accidentally injure people or themselves if startled or unsupported.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Plan for an **initial veterinary exam** after acquisition and **annual wellness checkups** with an experienced reptile veterinarian.

**Common health issues:**

* Respiratory infections (often from incorrect humidity or temperatures)
* External parasites (mites)
* Internal parasites (especially in wild-caught or imported snakes)
* Obesity from overfeeding
* Mouth infections (stomatitis)
* Inclusion Body Disease (IBD) in mixed collections with other large constrictors

**Warning signs:**

* Lethargy or weakness
* Loss of appetite over multiple feeding cycles
* Wheezing, open-mouth breathing, nasal discharge
* Swollen jaw or mouth lesions
* Abnormal or incomplete shedding
* Regurgitation (especially repeated events)

Early veterinary care is crucial to prevent **serious complications**.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Burmese pythons **benefit greatly** from a large, enriched, well-structured environment.

**Enrichment strategies:**

* Multiple secure hides for thermoregulation and stress reduction
* Large water basin for soaking and humidity
* Sturdy climbing structures or shelves (especially for younger snakes)
* Substrate deep enough to allow shaping and burrowing
* Rearranged décor periodically to encourage exploration
* Naturalistic elements like cork bark, logs, or rock hides

A well-designed enclosure supports **natural behaviors**, reduces stress, and promotes **mental and physical health**.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* One of the **largest snake species in the world**, regularly exceeding 12–18 feet in captivity.
* Known for **powerful constriction** to subdue prey.
* Native to **Southeast Asian tropical forests and grasslands** with warm, humid climates.
* Popular morphs include **albino, granite, green, and more**.
* Can live **20–30+ years** with excellent care.

### **Supplies & Care Checklist**

* Extra-large, secure enclosure (≥8–12 ft long for adults)
* Thermostats for all heat sources
* Digital thermometers and hygrometers
* Ceramic or halogen heat sources
* Under-tank heat mats (if suitable)
* Multiple secure hides (warm and cool sides)
* Large, stable water basin for soaking
* Appropriate substrate (cypress mulch, coconut husk, newspaper)
* Humid hide with damp moss for shedding
* Feeding tongs for safe prey offering
* Frozen/thawed appropriately sized rodents, rabbits, or poultry
* Cleaning supplies and reptile-safe disinfectants
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits (appropriate to size)

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*