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Reticulated Python Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The **Reticulated Python** is one of the world’s largest snake species, native to Southeast Asia. Known for their intricate, net-like patterning (hence “reticulated”), these snakes are powerful constrictors and highly intelligent. In captivity, they are kept primarily by experienced reptile keepers due to their **size, strength, and advanced care needs**.

Reticulated pythons can reach **12–20 feet in length** or more, though smaller “dwarf” and “super dwarf” localities exist that remain under 10 feet. Lifespans exceed **20–25 years**, making these snakes a significant, long-term responsibility. Proper handling and enclosure management are essential for safety and welfare.

## **Housing & Environment**

These large, active snakes require **very spacious enclosures** with room to stretch, thermoregulate, and explore. Enclosure size should scale with the snake’s growth.

### **Enclosure Recommendations**

* **Juveniles:** 40–75 gallon enclosure minimum
* **Adults (standard size):** Minimum 6’x3’x2’, larger for full-grown females
* **Super dwarf adults:** Minimum 4’x2’x2’, depending on size
* Custom PVC or melamine enclosures with sliding front doors are recommended
* Must have **secure locks**—retics are strong and known escape artists

### **Substrate Options**

* Coconut husk, cypress mulch, or aspen bedding
* Paper-based substrate or reptile carpet for easier cleaning
* Maintain dry top layer with slightly damp lower layer for humidity

Provide large hides, climbing perches, and secure water access. Clean spot waste daily and replace substrate every 4–6 weeks.

## **Heating, Lighting & Humidity**

Reticulated pythons thrive in warm, tropical conditions with a consistent temperature gradient and adequate humidity.

### **Temperature**

* **Basking area:** 88–92°F
* **Cool side ambient:** 75–80°F
* **Nighttime:** do not drop below 72–75°F
* Use radiant heat panels or ceramic emitters with thermostats

### **Lighting**

* Retics do not require UVB, but **low-intensity UVB or full-spectrum lighting** may support overall wellbeing
* Provide a 12-hour light/dark cycle
* Avoid excessively bright lighting—they prefer lower light levels

### **Humidity**

* Maintain **60–70% humidity**
* Mist enclosure lightly or use a fogger as needed
* Provide a large water bowl for soaking and humidity control

Monitor temperature and humidity with digital tools at both ends of the enclosure.

## **Diet & Feeding**

Reticulated pythons are constrictors and should be fed **appropriately sized, whole-prey items**. Due to their metabolism and growth rate, feeding frequency changes with age.

### **Feeding Schedule**

* **Juveniles:** Feed every 7–10 days
* **Adults:** Feed every 14–21 days
* Prey size: roughly equal to the widest part of the snake’s body
* Common prey: frozen-thawed rats, rabbits, guinea pigs, or chickens (depending on snake size)

Use feeding tongs and never handle the snake for 24–48 hours post-feeding to avoid regurgitation or defensive behavior.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Reticulated pythons are **smart, alert, and food-responsive**. With consistent, confident handling, many can become well-mannered. However, caution is always required, especially with larger individuals.

* Establish a **feeding routine** and use a snake hook to distinguish handling from feeding
* Always support the snake’s full body
* Never free-handle large adults alone—have a second person present for safety
* Monitor temperament—retics can shift from calm to defensive quickly if startled

With routine care, many individuals become **docile and interactive**, but handling must be respectful and deliberate.

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

Routine veterinary exams are essential for early detection of health issues, particularly in large constrictors.

### **Common Health Concerns**

* Respiratory infections from improper temps or humidity
* Mites and skin infections
* Regurgitation due to overhandling or large meals
* Mouth rot (stomatitis)
* Retained shed or eyecaps from low humidity
* Obesity in overfed captive snakes

Schedule yearly wellness exams and monitor weight, behavior, and shedding patterns.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Reticulated pythons benefit from spacious, structured environments that support climbing, hiding, and exploration.

### **Enrichment Ideas**

* Varied terrain (climbing logs, platforms)
* Rearranged hides or décor
* Enclosures with multiple basking and resting zones
* Occasional supervised exploration in a secure area
* Naturalistic setups with live or artificial plants

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Reticulated pythons are **among the longest snakes on Earth**
* Super dwarf varieties stay under 10 feet and are more manageable in captivity
* They are **strong and agile**—handling requires experience and caution
* Their beautiful reticulated pattern provides natural camouflage in the wild
* Lifespan in captivity can exceed **25 years** with excellent care

## **Supplies Checklist**

* Escape-proof enclosure sized for adult dimensions
* Radiant heat panel, ceramic heater, or basking bulb (on thermostat)
* Digital thermometers and hygrometer
* Hides and strong climbing structures
* Substrate that holds humidity safely
* Large water dish for drinking and soaking
* Feeding tongs and snake hook
* Calcium (for feeder supplementation only if using non-whole prey)
* Reptile-safe disinfectant
* Secure carrier or tub for transport
* Backup handler or support for large adults

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*