

# Clark's Pet Emporium

## Ball Python Care Sheet



*Species - Ball (Royal) Python*  
*Color - Classic, Normal*

Clark's Pet Emporium has taken pride in sharing quality pets with our community for over 40 years. Now you can give your pet the very best care, from our home to yours, with Clark's Care Sheets.

The Ball Python care sheet will provide you with basic knowledge to begin your new life with a snake, ranging from diet to habitat and snake husbandry. For further details regarding specific care, please contact Clark's with your questions and concerns.

### Is a Python the right pet for you?

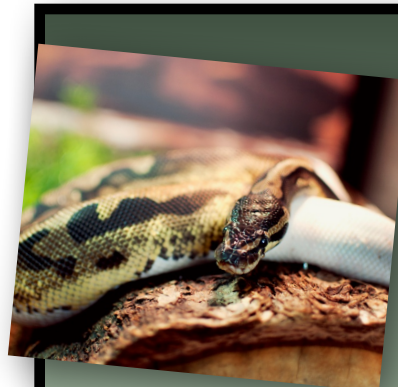
Please take a moment to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have adequate space to house a properly constructed and secured python enclosure?
- Are you prepared to offer your Ball Python the food it will need? Food items will consist of live or frozen rodents, sometimes baby rodents that can be emotionally difficult to feed to another animal!
- Are you willing to make considerable investment in the special lighting, housing, and heating requirements of your reptile?
- Does your lifestyle support the fact that this pet will be a part of your family for the next 20-50 years? The current longest recorded lifespan of any snake in captivity belongs to a Ball Python (NERD Herpetocultural Library, 2009), making this decision a serious commitment!

If you answered "yes!" to ALL of these questions, read through the rest of this care sheet and visit your favorite Clark's location to inquire about adopting a Ball Python!

### Shopping Check-List:

- Ball Python book / reading material
- Appropriate sized enclosure, terrarium, or aquarium
- Enclosure substrate / bedding
- Appropriate heat source (basking light or tropical heat pad)
- Appropriate size hide (cave, tunnel, bark, or decorations) to make the animal feel less exposed
- Water bowl and bathing container
- Water sprayer, humidifier, or fogger
- Diet - Live or frozen/pre-killed rodents of the appropriate size
- Reptile-safe cleaning supplies



*Color Morph -*  
*Piebald*

## Dietary Needs:

- Ball Pythons exclusively eat rodents. Rats are a superior source of nutrition over mice, providing more protein, less fat
- As a safer alternative to live food, pre-killed frozen rodents can be thawed and fed
- The thickness of the rodent should be equal to the largest diameter of the snake's body. Pythons can easily unhinge their jaw bones to swallow food larger than their mouth appears!
- Never feed wild rodents to your python! These animals can carry diseases or may have come into contact with toxins
- Fresh, cool water available at all times to soak and drink



*Ball Python - Spider Morph*

## Housing:

- Young Ball Pythons under 2' can be housed in a 20 gallon terrarium. Larger Pythons will require a minimum of 40 gallons. It is recommended to house Ball Pythons individually
- All snakes are adept escape artists! Any access points must be securely locked, leaving no gaps
- High humidity is necessary for Ball Pythons to shed properly. Use coconut fiber, bark, and moss as substrate to retain moisture. Spray the enclosure as needed to maintain at least 50-70% humidity at all times
- Provide a water source large enough for the entire python to bathe in
- Offer a hide large enough for the entire python to fit inside. Branches and decorations can also be provided for climbing
- The layout of the enclosure should allow for a warm area on one side, a cool area with water on the opposite side, and a neutral temperature gradient across the middle

## Feeding Practice:

- It is recommended to place your python in a large plastic tub separate from their housing for feeding - this practice reduces the chance that your python associates your handling with food!
- Once the rodent is consumed, allow 20 minutes for the python's feeding response to turn off before returning it to the enclosure
- If feeding live rodents, NEVER leave the snake unattended - rodents can defend themselves and have been known to mangle or kill Ball Pythons!
- Ball Pythons under 4 years old should be fed once every 7 days. Once a Ball Python is over 4 years old, feedings can be reduced to once every 14 days as their metabolism slows down
- Ball Pythons can sometimes refuse food for long periods of time. If your python begins to lose weight, it may be time for a veterinarian visit to check for illnesses

## Safety Tips:

Ball Pythons, like all reptiles, carry the salmonella bacteria. It has the potential to make people, especially children, very sick! Handle your python regularly, but ALWAYS disinfect your hands and surfaces in contact with the reptile afterward!

Do not put rocks or sticks found in your yard directly into your pet's enclosure! You may inadvertently introduce insects, parasites, fungus, bacteria, or toxins into your reptile's habitat!

Never place the enclosure in direct sunlight. Glass allows light in, but traps all heat from escaping. This may lead to dangerously high temperatures for your reptile!

Always supervise a reptile outside its enclosure! They can easily slip away in seconds and may never be found, especially snakes!

## Heating and Lighting

- Lights should be kept on a 12 hour night/day cycle. A proper day and night cycle is essential for Ball Python behavior and health
- Ambient enclosure temperature should be 80°-85°F with a basking temperature of 90°-95°F. Night time temperatures can safely drop to 72°-78°F.
- Heat sources should be placed to one end of the habitat, allowing for a steady gradient from hot to cool
- If temperatures are difficult to maintain, consider supplementing your heat source with an infrared bulb that can be left on permanently
- UVB lighting is not necessary for these nocturnal creatures, as they have adapted to a lifestyle of staying out of direct sunlight, but new research shows that the inclusion of UVB lighting may benefit Ball Python temperament, growth, and color

## Cleaning and Maintenance:

- Routinely remove soiled substrate and water immediately. Replace all substrate once per month
- The high humidity of the enclosure may lead to mold growth. Be sure to immediately clean out any fungus or mold. Try spraying less water, but more frequently to avoid soaking the substrate
- Never use harsh household chemicals in a reptile enclosure. A pet-safe cleaner or 50/50 mix of water and vinegar can safely clean the habitat and loosen water mineral deposits on glass



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