



CAL ZOO'S REFERENCE SHEET



BOA CONSTRICTORS

Latin name	Boa constrictor	Maximum length	6 -8 feet (approx)
Native to	Colombia	Approximate life span	20+ years

GENERAL INFORMATION

This is one of the most popular pet snakes due to their great temperament and beautiful markings. All the baby boas sold by California Zoological Supply are captive or farm bred. The baby season starts in January and ends around June. Boas are arboreal (tree climbing) snakes, so provide lots of climbing branches so they can move about. They are also nocturnal (active at night) so you will more than likely not see them move much during the day. These are great animals for anyone who wants something impressive and of a nice size but one that doesn't get too large. Albino Boa Constrictors are also slowly showing up on the market. The price is still prohibitive for most hobbyists, but should decrease in a few years.

ENCLOSURE

The enclosure should be no shorter than ½ the snakes body length. Baby Boas can live in a 20-gallon aquarium for up to a year but be prepared to get a larger enclosure later on. Boas are notorious escape artists so your enclosure can never be too secure. To avoid respiratory infections, the enclosure should provide plenty of ventilation. A secure hiding place is also important.

SUBSTRATE

As a substrate you can use Zoo Med REPTI-BARK™, Zoo Med CAGE CARPET or pine shavings. But DO NOT, under any circumstances, use cedar shavings! Its oils are toxic to reptiles. The substrate should remain dry.

TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Daytime temperatures 84 - 90°F. Do not let nighttime temperatures drop below 78°F. If a large water bowl is used, the humidity level should be fine. Never allow water to condense on the glass. The cause of condensation could be attributed to an overly wet enclosure, inadequate ventilation, or both.

HEATING

Reptiles need to be able to regulate their body temperature, so a temperature range must be provided. Use a Zoo Med REPTITHERM® UNDER TANK HEATER (U.T.H.). Leave it on 24 hours a day. UTH's take a few hours to reach their optimal temperature. For easy heat control, use a Zoo Med REPTI-TEMP™ RHEOSTAT in conjunction with the U.T.H.'s. Always use at least one thermometer. Two thermometers are optimal in all reptile and amphibian enclosures, placing one thermometer on the cooler side, and one on the warmer side. A Zoo Med DELUXE ANALOG MIN/MAX THERMOMETER works great to show the high and low temperatures in a 24-hour period.

LIGHTING

UVB is not a necessity, but not harmful. If desired, use a Zoo Med REPTISUN™ 2.0 fluorescent 8 - 12 hours a day. The UVA spectrum this bulb provides is beneficial to the psychological well-being of reptiles. All reptiles and amphibians need a photo period (light cycle). A plug in timer (for your white lights only, do not use a timer for your heating devices) works well to develop a regular photo period of 8 - 10 hours of light, 14 - 16 hours of dark. Reptiles and amphibians cannot see the red light spectrum, so a Zoo Med NOCTURNAL INFRARED HEAT LAMP is ideal for nighttime viewing.

FOOD & WATER

Feed your boa rodents. Single food item should not be larger than snake's girth. Baby Boa Constrictors should be fed weekly. A mouse that has just got its hair (known as fuzzies or hoppers) will be sufficient. Increase the size of the food as the snake grows. It is best to feed pre-killed food items. If the snake gets a bad strike on the rodent, the rodent may be able to turn its body in order to bite the snake. Severe damage to the snake or even death may occur. Keeping a supply of pre-killed rodents in the freezer will ensure a steady supply of food in case obtaining them becomes a problem. Be sure to thaw rodents at room temperature before feeding to your snake. Do not use the microwave! The internal temperature of the rodent may become extremely hot and cause severe internal burns to your snake even if part of the rodent is still frozen. Do not feed Boas in their living quarters as this may condition them to strike at you when you want to pick them up. Do not attempt to pick up any snake with the scent of other animals on your hands or clothing. This may entice the snake to strike in hunger. For water, provide a large, sturdy bowl which cannot tip over and make sure water is always fresh and clean.

NOTES

Always wash your hands before and immediately after handling reptiles and amphibians. Never leave live food long term with reptiles & amphibians. They can inflict severe harm or even kill your pet. If your animals take some time to eat or you feed them at night, leave a slice of potato, carrot, or dry dog food for the live food items to eat. Your local pet shop is an ideal source for reptile and amphibian related books and supplies. Please make sure you read and become familiar with any instructions provided with reptile support products you may purchase. . For further information on reptiles and amphibians we recommend you read *REPTILES MAGAZINE* and *THE VIVARIUM*. California Zoological Supply hopes you have enjoyed reading this reference sheet on Boa Constrictors. We hope that our guidelines will assist you with the care or possible purchase of your new pet.

This sheet may be copied in its entirety only.

