

CAL ZOO'S REFERENCE SHEET

ROSY BOA

Latin name	Lichanura trivirgata ssp.	Maximum Length	2 - 3 feet
Native to	North America	Approximate life span	Undocumented

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Latin name, *Lichanura trivirgata*, translates to "Finger-like tail" and "Three stripes". Cousins to the sand boas and rubber boas, rosy boas are one of only two boa species native to North America, sharing that distinction with the rubber boa. Not only are rosy boas extremely docile in comparison to other boa species, they are one of the most docile snake species, period. Combine their easy-going nature and the striking colors they exhibit and you have one very desirable snake. Rosy boas are excellent feeders and have a sensitive feeding trigger. If kept together for long periods (other than for breeding purposes) they may tend to strike at anything that moves (i.e. cagemates). After a while rosy boas might get discouraged at not getting a mouthful of mouse when it strikes and may stop striking. This will keep your rosy boa from eating. To avoid this problem keep all rosy boas individually until it is time to put them together for breeding (April/May through June). Keep the male and female together for one week to one month at a time through this period.

ENCLOSURE

Enclosure size is not much of an important factor for these stout-bodied snakes. One adult rosy boa can easily exist in a 15 - 20 gallon aquarium. A more important factor to consider is ventilation. Rosy boas do not survive well in humid conditions. In fact their environment should be downright dry. Ample ventilation is a must for rosy boas.

SUBSTRATE

Although newspaper is adequate for rosy boas, a substrate that allows them to burrow is more desirable. Pine shavings are fine, but for a more natural look, commercial reptile sand is a good choice. In either case, placing a couple layers of newspaper down before the final substrate will help during cleanup times.

TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Rosy boas occur naturally in the deserts of North America (specifically southern California, western Arizona and western Mexico). Therefore, their temperatures should mimic those of the southwestern United States and Mexican deserts. The cool end of the enclosure should fall into the low 80's while the warm side should reach the high 80's. If the over-all daytime temperature is allowed to drop below 80°, then your rosy boa will run the risk of regurgitation. Whether you're planning on breeding your rosy boa or not, it is a good idea to place it in short-term hibernation (brumation) also known as winter cool-down, for 4 - 6 weeks. First be sure they have had access to water and that they have not been fed recently. Next, place the snakes individually in ventilated containers with dry, absorbent substrate but include **NO WATER**. Place the containers in a cool area (approx 50° - 60°). If you plan to place your rosy boas in brumation longer than 6 weeks, you should place a water bowl in their container every week or two and remove after 12 hours. To take them out of brumation, you should place them back into their enclosure with the temperature set as mentioned above (80° - 85°). You will find your rosy boa ready to eat right away. Rosy boas are extremely susceptible to respiratory infection, so be sure the relative humidity remains low.

HEATING

There are many choices when it comes to heating your rosy boa's enclosure. When heating from above you can use a Zoo Med REPTI BASKING SPOT LAMP, NOCTURNAL INFRARED HEAT LAMP, or a REPTICARE CERAMIC HEAT EMITTER. When heating from below, a Zoo Med REPTITHERM U.T.H. (Under-tank-heater) is the best choice. Most breeders are heating their enclosures from below. Be sure you only heat one end of the enclosure in order to give your rosy boa the opportunity to thermoregulate (that is; allowing them the choice of temperatures in order to keep their body temperature at it's optimal level).

LIGHTING

There are no specific lighting requirements for the rosy boa, except for one: Do not keep white lights on for more than 12 hours at a time. Rosy boas (like all animals) need a photoperiod. Leaving white lights on all the time is damaging to any animal's mental well-being. This is where INFRARED HEAT LAMPS and REPTICARE CERAMIC HEAT EMITTERs help. They give off little to no light and will not disrupt your rosy boa's day/night cycle. To help create a natural daytime lighting scheme, you should consider the Zoo Med REPTISUN 2.0 fluorescent light. It's high UVA output will enhance the color of your rosy boa and, at the same time, be a benefit to it's mental well-being.

FOOD & WATER

Rosy boas eat rodents. As with many snakes, a weekly feeding should be sufficient. A general rule-of-thumb is if the food item is equal to or slightly smaller than the girth of the snake, it is just right. Try to avoid feeding your rosy boa any food that is larger around than the snake. A weekly feeding (even every-other week) will be fine. Since, as already mentioned, rosy boas live in the desert, their contact with water is rare. The same watering schedule given during brumation can be followed the rest of the year; place a water bowl in their enclosure every week or two and remove after 12 hours.

NOTES

Always wash your hands before and immediately after handling reptiles and amphibians. Never leave live food long term with reptiles and amphibians. They can inflict severe harm or even kill your pet. If your animals take some time to eat or if 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 rosy boas. We hope that our guidelines will assist you with the care or possible purchase of your new pet.

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