



## Royal python; *Python regius*

**Adult size;** 1.5m (5')

**Origin;** western, eastern and central Africa

**Temperature;** 26°C to 33°C (80°F to 91°F)

**Longevity;** 20 to 25 years

Royal pythons have increased in popularity in the past few years, this is due to their placid nature, manageable size and overall ease of care. With the selected breeding there is a massive range of colour

morph and phases now available.

### Housing

Royal Pythons are not highly active and do not need huge enclosures. Using a medium size vivarium helps the royal python feel more secure within its enclosure. 90 x 60 x 60cm (36 x 24 x 24") is advisable for an adult royal. Hatchlings and young royals should be housed in enclosures' suitable to their size. Housing any size Royal python in a vivarium which is too large can allow them to become stressed and then stop feeding. All Snakes are excellent escape artists, so care must be taken when planning their housing.

### Substrate

There are a number of different substrate's available for use with Royal pythons. Aspen bedding is absorbent and soft substrate that gives your snake a chance to burrow. Lignocel bedding is a softer and finer choice of substrate, very similar to aspen with a reduced level of dust. Beech chips allow easy cleaning and stay in place as the snake moves around the enclosure. Paper pellets are very absorbent.

### Temperature and lighting

Royal pythons cannot make their own body heat so they rely on their environment. They achieve this by basking under a heat source to warm up and move away from the heat source to cool down. Heat is required not only for them to keep warm but it is critical for their digestion. Too high or too low of a temperature can cause a loss of appetite, a weakened immune system, slower growth rate and possible health problems.

Royal pythons should have a basking area of 29°C to 33°C (82.4F to 90°F) with a gradient of 25°C to 27°C (77°F to 7°F) at the cool end. One of the best ways to achieve this is by using a ceramic heat bulb attached to a thermostat so that the temperature can be controlled. There are loads of different thermostats on the market so make sure you have the right style for your heat emitter. There is a selection of different types of heating equipment which can be used within royal python enclosures. The best way to check that your heating equipment is holding the temperatures is by using thermometers at different points within the vivarium. Any heat bulb should have a guard fitted to prevent your Royal python coming in contact with the bulb.

It is not essential to provide lighting within a Royal python enclosure, however many owners do to aid viewing of their royal python. Any lighting that is provided should be fixed securely in place. Any spot bulbs should be guarded to safely guard the snake.

## Décor

This is an area of real personal preference, just bear in mind that your royal python will need strong secure surfaces to climb on as it grows. Last thing you would want is it to fall and injure your snake. Items commonly seen in royal python vivariums are; Natural wood, cork bark, bamboo roots, pebbles, rocks. Live plants are not really advisable as they tend to kill them by climbing on them and breaking the stems. Moss boxes and damp hides can help prevent problems when your snake is shedding.

## Feeding

Royals in the wild would feed from a selection of rodents, reptiles, amphibians and birds. Most captive Royals are fed on defrosted rodents. The size of the rodent will vary depending on the size of the snake. When feeding we aim to provide a rodent which leaves a visible bolus in the main body of the snake. Royal pythons can be fussy feeders and this will vary with each individual. Some royal pythons will feed every 7-10 days for others the gap between feeds can be larger.

## Water

Water should always be available for your Royal Python. They are generally heavy-bodied so it is always best to purchase a heavy bowl to stop the bowl being knocked over. The water bowl should be large enough for the snake to submerge its whole body. Fresh water should be provided every other day as a minimum.

## Handling and Temperament

Royal Pythons can be very nervous so time and patience should be taken when handling. Hatchlings are naturally scared and nervous so handling once a day will benefit the snake's confidence and will make them tolerate handling a lot easier. Upon purchasing your Royal Python, a couple of days should be given before handling as they are still getting used to their environment and surroundings. Handling for short periods of time once a day will be beneficial for the snake. Never handle your snake after a meal as it may be likely to regurgitate its meal. Handling when shedding is also a problem, as the snake's eyesight is very weak at this point and could strike out of fear causing stress to the animal. When approaching the snake confidently but gently pick up the body and support both the upper body and lower body without touching the head. Hesitation will only stress the snake so confidence is the key when handling. Royal Pythons are docile species so they will tolerate a lot.