



Boa Constrictors *Boa constrictor ssp.*

- Boa constrictors are a widespread snake, ranging from Mexico, through Central America, and into South America (Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Guyana).
- A heavy bodied tan, brown, yellowish, to cream colored snake with dark brown to reddish brown “Bow Tie” shaped blotches, a dark stripe running behind each of the eyes, and red to reddish orange blotches towards the tail.
- Often known as “red tailed” boa, but most boas in pet industry are Common boas *Boa constrictor imperator* (BCI), and not true “red tails”, *Boa constrictor constrictor* (BCC).
- If provided the proper care, Boa constrictors can attain longevity of 20-25 years or more.

Size

Ranges from 12-18 inches as neonates. 5-8 feet (54-96”) on average for Males, 7-9 feet (84-108”) on average for Females. Consider the potential adult size of a Boa Constrictor prior to obtaining one.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Young boa constrictors can be housed in a 20-30 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult boas should be housed in a minimum of a 50-70 gallon long terrarium or similar 36” to 48” by 20” enclosure. Boas will thrive on a substrate of newspaper, cage liner material, or cypress mulch. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide a water bowl or dish and a hide box at all times in the enclosure. Artificial foliage, driftwood, and other cage furnishings can provide additional security.

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Overhead, incandescent lighting can also be used, but is not required for Boas (which are primarily nocturnal). Ideal temperatures for boas range from 75-80 degrees F on the cool side and 86-92 degrees F on the warm side.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, boa constrictors will prey upon a variety of animals including rodents and other small to medium sized mammals, birds, and lizards.

Most young boas are large enough to be started off on weanling to small adult mice or rats once per 5-7 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult boas can be fed medium to large adult rats or rabbits once every 14 days (or bi weekly). A general rule of thumb to follow when feeding snakes is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the widest point of the snake.

Handling

As with many snakes, young and juvenile boas are often initially more nervous and defensive. Young boas may gape and hiss, and attempt to bite what they perceive to be a threat or a predator. Handle your boa gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Most boas are docile and will become more tolerant and accustomed to handling as they become older. Larger boas do require some careful handling though; Do not place or allow a larger snake around the neck when handling a Boa constrictor.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****