



Green Anaconda *Eunectes murinus*

- The green anaconda is a large, heavy bodied aquatic to semi aquatic boa species indigenous to the swamps, riverways, and flooded wetlands of the Amazon basin in South America (including Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay).
- A heavy bodied snake with an olive to olive brown ground color with two rows of oval shaped dark, alternating dorsal spots or blotches, and yellowish lateral specks bordered in black. There is also a reddish orange post ocular stripe running from behind the eyes and head.
- Green anacondas are largely aquatic to semi aquatic ambush predators, using the water to support their weight. They are known as the heaviest species snakes in the world in regards to maximum recorded weights.
- If provided the proper care, green anacondas can attain longevity of 20-25 years or more.

Size

Ranges from 18-24 inches as neonates. Adult green anacondas are larger than their smaller cousin the yellow anaconda, and usually range from 9 to 13 feet in males, and up typically reaching 15 to 18 feet for females. These snakes are not for beginners, and the potential size of this species should be considered prior to obtaining one.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Juvenile green anacondas can be housed in a 20-30 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adults should be housed in a minimum of a 6' to 8' by 3 1/2' enclosure. Green anacondas can be maintained 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. Being largely semi aquatic, anacondas will require a large sturdy water dish or tub they can readily enter and exit, and that must be cleaned, sanitized, and changed frequently and regularly. Providing an adequately sized hidebox in the enclosure should also be included. Artificial foliage, driftwood, and other cage furnishings can also 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 anacondas (which are primarily nocturnal). Ideal temperatures for a green anaconda range from 78-80 degrees F on the cool side/ambient temperature and 86-92 degrees F on the warm side. Providing adequate humidity is also important in maintaining anacondas. Greens are less tolerant of and more susceptible to husbandry issues associated with lower humidity levels than yellow anacondas, and require at least 70-80% humidity. Using the correct substrate, as well as providing a humid hide box with sphagnum moss will help maintain desired humidity levels. Overall, the enclosure should be maintained at humid levels but not be wet or moist since this leads to other health related implications.

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, green anacondas are carnivorous, and will prey upon a variety of animals including rodents and other small to large sized mammals, fish, birds, and lizards, and other reptiles.

Most juvenile green anacondas are large enough to be started off on rat pups once per 5-7 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult anacondas can be fed medium to large adult rats or rabbits once every 14 days (or bi weekly). Green anacondas can (especially those of wild caught or questionable origin or history), at least initially, be finicky feeders in some cases, and may require other food items such as pre-killed mice or chicks, or more opportunities to feel secure using additional feeding methods generally accepted for snakes more reluctant to eat. Overall, 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

Both species of anacondas maintained in captivity (yellow anaconda and the green anaconda) require previous knowledge and experience in handling larger, and/or sometimes aggressive snakes. The origin of the animal chosen (wild caught vs. captive born), as well as the frequency and methods of how they are kept and handled will often determine to a great extent the disposition of anacondas to being handled. Despite their often negative widespread reputation for being nasty or unpredictable, captive bred and born green anacondas that are handled regularly from an early age can become tractable and more easily handled. Anacondas certainly are not for everyone, and are certainly not beginner's snakes (only for experienced and responsible individuals), but with the correct husbandry and handling, can make for a rewarding reptile keeping experience for the right individuals.

****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****