



DAVID VELLA

exotics vet

Dr David Vella BSc BVSc (Hons) DABVP
t 02 9572 6854 f 02 9572 6159
e david.vella@bigpond.com
w www.davidvella.com.au
North Shore Veterinary Specialist Centre
a 64 Atchison St Crows Nest NSW 2065
t 02 9436 4884 f 02 9906 5710

CHILDREN'S, STIMSON'S AND SPOTTED PYTHON CARE

This group of pythons are **non-venomous snakes native to Australia**. They belong to the genus *Antaresia*. There are four known species in this genus including the **Children's python** *A. childreni*, **Stimson's python** *A. stimsoni*, **Spotted python** *A. maculosa* and **Pygmy python** *A. perthensis*. They are generally relatively easy & low maintenance reptiles to keep in captivity. They are gentle creatures, though some individuals may be more temperamental. These pythons rarely grow over 1m in length & may live for over 20 years. Below outlines some 'basic' requirements for keeping these pythons as pets.

Please note: All Australian snakes are **protected species** in Australia. Seek individual state & territory requirements for legalities on keeping snakes as pets.

Housing

- Pythons can be housed indoors. They require **suitable artificial heat & light sources** as outlined below
- Suitable **enclosures** include ventilated glass/clear plastic fronted wooden or plastic cabinets at least 0.8m long x 0.5m wide x 0.4m high. Juveniles can be kept in smaller plastic tubs - **beware their ability to escape!**
- Furnish the cage with a **hide box**, **branches** for climbing & a **water bowl** heavy/large enough for the snake to bathe in
- **Substrates** (enclosure floor covering) are most simply & hygienically provided by means of newspaper sheets. These pythons may like to 'burrow' so using recycled paper 'cat litter' pellets is also suitable
- Enclosures should be **disinfected** at least once weekly (use household bleach diluted 1:10 with water & rinse well afterwards) & 'spot' cleaned as necessary
- Pythons can be **housed individually or in pairs**, but beware that fighting may occur. Avoid feeding them together
- **Heating:** Provide them with a 'temperature gradient' in their enclosure. This means they need a 'hot' end & a 'cool' end. The temperatures should be monitored with thermometers at both of these ends
- The **hot/basking area** end can be heated with a thermostatically controlled ceramic/reflector globe to create a basking temp of 32-35C. At the cool end, aim for 24-27C. (nb; different species require different temperatures)
- Overnight temperatures should not fall below 21C. The use of heat mats or red light/ceramic heat lamps may be required to achieve this 'night heat'. Do not use heat rocks, as serious burns to the python could result.
- **Lighting:** Even though nocturnal, Pythons may benefit from **UVB light** which may aid in natural foraging and feeding behaviours. The effective UVB emission lifespan of these lights is usually in the vicinity of 3-6 months, so they will need to be replaced at least every 6 months
- UVB light may not be essential to pythons, it's a good idea to give them regular access to natural unfiltered sunlight
- Recommended day and night cycles for these python species is **12 hrs light and 12 hrs dark**

Handling

- Most Pythons can become very used to being handled. Over handling though may be stressful
- **Support the whole body** of the snake & avoid squeezing them

Feeding

- Pythons are **carnivorous**. They should be fed whole prey such as rodents. All items fed **MUST be dead**. It is illegal and inhumane to feed snakes live prey items
- Occasional supplementation with **multivitamins** added to the food is a good idea
- Feed pythons around **10% of their body weight** weekly for juveniles & every 2-3 weeks for adults

Veterinary & Health Notes

- Have any new python examined by a reptile vet. Parasite checks and general blood screens can be performed
- It is essential that you **quarantine any newly acquired reptile**. Don't risk introducing disease or parasites. Speak to your reptile vet for details on sound quarantine procedures
- It is recommended that you have your reptiles **vet-checked annually**. Especially if you intend to breed them
- Pythons can also be **microchipped** to aid in identification and ownership
- Always **wash your hands** after handling any reptile & between handling of different reptiles
- It is a good idea to regularly weigh & record the body weight of your pythons
- Pythons can be transported individually in tied cotton bags & then placed into an insulated container. Ensure that they can't escape or overheat