BALL PYTHON CARE

Ball pythons are not terribly active snakes, so a smaller enclosure is fine (10-20 gallon tank for younger snakes, 30 gallon tank for an adult). However, they are adept escape artists, so a securely fitted top is a absolutely necessary.

* **Substrate:** Aspen shavings, (never use cedar), paper grocery bags, hay, or reptile carpet,
* **Furnishings:** provide sturdy branches and a dark hiding place (they like to feel securely enclosed, so it should be just large enough to accommodate the snake).
* **Temperature:** 80 - 85 F (27 - 29 C) during the day, with a basking spot of around 90 F (32 C). Night time temperatures can fall to around 75 F A basking light or ceramic heating element can be used to provide the basking temperatures. *Never* use hot rocks, and the bulb or heat element should be placed or screened off to prevent contact with the snake or burns may result. Use multiple thermometers to monitor the temperatures in the cage (one at the bottom of the cage and one at the basking spot).
* **Lighting:** Ball Pythons are nocturnal, so have no special lighting requirements.
* **Water and Humidity:** provide a dish large enough for the snake to soak in. Soaking is especially important during sheds. Some owners like to provide a covered dish (e.g. plastic storage container) with a hole in the lid, to provide security for the snake so it will soak longer if necessary. Another alternative is to provide a humidity retreat, which similarly uses a covered container with an access hole lined with damp sphagnum moss to provide the moisture (a water dish is still provided outside the retreat).

**Feeding**
Ball pythons can be fed exclusively mice or small to medium sized rats (as appropriate for the size of the snake), and only need to be fed every two to three weeks. Young snakes should be fed fuzzy mice every 5-7 days, older snakes should be fed increasingly larger prey and can go a little longer (i.e. 10 - 14 days). Use pre-killed prey as live mice can injure a snake - dangling the prey in front of the snake with forceps usually gets the snake interested.

Moving the snake out of its cage into a separate enclosure for feeding is a good idea and will help in the taming process. The snake will associate eating with the other enclosure, and is less likely to confuse your hand for prey when you put your hand into the cage. This will make it easier to reach into the cage to get the ball python out for handling.