



Maryland Avian & Exotics Veterinary Care

DR. LISA CARR, DVM



SNAKE CARE AND HUSBANDRY

DIET

Snakes should be fed once weekly until mature, then they should be fed every other week. You should feed pinkies, mice or rats, depending on the size of your snake. The prey item should be no larger than the thickest part of the snake. You may need to feed more than one prey item at each feeding if the items are small or if the snake is still acting hungry. It is ideal to feed frozen, thawed items. Offer your snake fresh water daily. The bowl should be large enough for the snake to soak its entire body in.

HOUSING

Cage: A 30-gallon fish tank is a good size to start with for hatchling snakes, and can also house smaller species as adults. A fine mesh screen top that is well secured should be adequate to keep your snake in the tank. Adult large species such as, Burmese pythons and Reticulated pythons will need very large cages to house them in. Misting the cage and/or soaking the snake, especially when going into shed, will be beneficial. Soaking should be done 2-3 times a week. A hide box lined with sphagnum moss can be constructed to help increase humidity. Arboreal species, such as Green Tree pythons, need a horizontal perch.

Heating Pads: Snakes need a good ventral heat source in order to digest their food. The area over the pad should reach about 90 degrees F. An under the tank heater is ideal for smaller snakes. The snake should be able to curl its entire body over the warm surface area. If your heating pad is too small, the snake will not be able to warm itself. With large snakes, an additional heat source may be necessary. You can use an incandescent bulb during the day. Snakes do not have a UVb requirement because they eat whole prey items.

Substrate: Newspaper, paper towels and indoor/outdoor carpet make the easiest to clean substrates. Try to stay away from particulate substrates as they tend to dry out the snake's skin, causing shedding difficulty, and tend to mold when misted.

VETERINARY CARE

Yearly examinations are recommended for snakes to help prevent disease and husbandry related problems. A majority of health problems in snakes are caused by a suboptimal environment. Metabolic bone disease, impactions, respiratory infections and reproductive related problems can easily be prevented/helped with veterinary guidance. It is also important to check newly purchase for pre-existing conditions and for internal and external parasites. To schedule an appointment, please call Dr. Carr at 240.687.1414.