

Caring For Carpet Pythons

Carpet pythons are a group of snake species found in Australia and nearby islands. They are known for their unique patterns and colours and are popular among reptile enthusiasts.

Carpet pythons typically grow to an average of 2-3 meters and are non-venomous. They are known to be hardy, and with proper husbandry and a good understanding of their requirements, they can do well in captivity.



Carpet pythons' individual requirements come down to what subspecies you are keeping; however, their recommended general husbandry guidelines can be found below.

Housing

Carpet pythons are best housed separately, except when breeding. Hatchlings can be kept in small lunch box-size tubs providing suitable hides, a clean and fresh water source, appropriate heating and a climbing branch. Subadult or adult pythons can be adequately housed indoors in a ventilated vivarium and generally prefer an arboreal set-up.

Enclosures must be secure and escape-proof. Wire-fronted vivarium's are not suitable for snakes. The vivarium must be adequately ventilated. A build-up of condensation could indicate damp conditions, poor ventilation, or both. Therefore, appropriate measures should be taken to avoid such conditions as they can predispose to various medical problems.

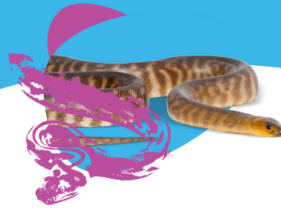


Captive Environment

Vivarium furnishings should be kept simple, with no sharp edges or points and several appropriate hides. These should be constructed so you can access the snake at any time. Keep the vivarium furnishing to a minimum to allow plenty of room for the snake to move around and exercise.

The floor covering or substrate should be easily removable for cleaning. Some options are newspaper, paper towel, recycled paper cat litter, sand, woodchips





and artificial turf. Each of the substrates noted has its pros and cons associated with their use. For example, newspaper is cheap, clean and easy to change however doesn't look as aesthetically pleasing as some of the other substrate options. Sand and recycled paper cat litter generally look nicer but carry risks if the snake accidentally ingests any substrate. Carefully consider the most appropriate substrate for your python and its environment.

A number of hide boxes or rock crevices must be provided to allow the snake to retreat and thermoregulate their own temperature at different points of the cage. Avoid adhesive tape inside the vivarium, as this can come loose and pose a risk to your snake.

Temperature and Lighting

Pythons like to bask beneath a spotlight or radiant heat panel for several hours each day. However, a heating pad or cable on or under a small section of the floor will allow ongoing access to a constant heat source. It is crucial that the snake is unable to wrap itself around or have any direct physical contact with the heat source, as this can lead to life-threatening thermal burns.

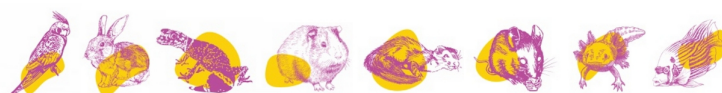


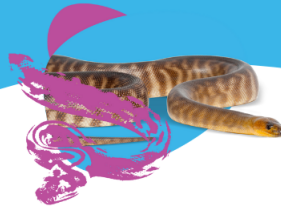
Generally, the heat and light source should be switched on, usually by means of a timer switch, for around 12 hours per day during the summer months, with the photoperiod (the time the light is on) reduced to 10 hours during the winter months. The ambient temperature at the warm end of the cage at night should not be allowed to drop lower than 20C for any extended period. With hatchling pythons (<1 year), a heat source should be provided 24 hours per day to ensure ideal growth and general health.

The heat source needs to be positioned at one end of the vivarium, creating a gradient of temperatures so that the snake can maintain a preferred body temperature by moving around the cage. The basking spot should reach about 33-35°C, and the opposite end of the vivarium should be about 20-25°C. Hatchlings (< 1 year) are best kept to less of a gradient (around 25°C- 34°C is generally appropriate). Appropriate heating and lighting equipment can be obtained at most reptile pet stores and from online reptile equipment suppliers.

Water

Fresh, clean water should be provided at all times in a solid non-spillable container and changed regularly.





Food

Carpet pythons will eat mice or rats of an appropriate size in relation to their body size. Young pythons will become very active when hungry and require feeding every 7 – 10 days. Adults will often be ready to feed immediately after defecation. Frozen food items must be completely thawed before they are offered. This can be achieved by thawing the prey item in a container filled with warm water. The water may need to be changed to keep it warm enough to fully thaw the food through. Discard any food item not taken and never refreeze a thawed food source.

Most adults should be fed every 1-4 weeks; many snakes will continue to eat any food source that is offered, so it is important to be observant as some individuals may become obese.

Adult snakes may feed regularly for several months and then abstain from eating for long periods, occasionally for as long as six months. If the snake is reluctant to take food off the floor, offer it held in tongs. Remember, they are low-energy specialists spending most of their time doing nothing apart from basking. Avoid feeding if the snake has not been kept warm (i.e. during the winter months) or if sufficient heat is not available after feeding, as the food may decompose and start rotting in the stomach before it can be digested, resulting in regurgitation, gastrointestinal disease or even the death of your snake.



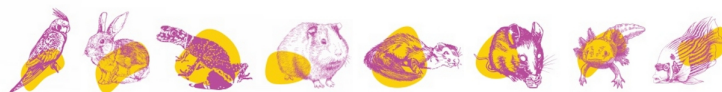
Captive Behaviour and Breeding

Young pythons may be nervous and bite. Most will settle with time and tolerate handling. Never grip the snake and restrict its movement during handling, as it will become alarmed. Do not handle a snake for several days after it has eaten, nor when in pre-slough condition or from the commencement of the "milky" eyes until it has shed its skin.

Probing by an experienced reptile vet can determine the sex of your snake and should not be attempted by those inexperienced as if done inappropriately, and serious damage can occur.

Female pythons usually grow slightly longer and heavier than males; however, the adult size often relates directly to their food intake and feeding regularity; hence some males can be larger than females.

Breeding success is improved by allowing a drop in the low nighttime temperatures in both sexes for 6-8 weeks during the winter months. Mating occurs in winter, with eggs being





deposited in late spring or early summer. Adult males are likely to fight during breeding season and should not be allowed to contact each other.

Health Problems

Reptiles, in general, are very good at hiding their health problems until they have become severe. For this reason, it is recommended your python is checked by an experienced reptile veterinarian every 6-12 months.



Common problems where veterinary advice is recommended are respiratory diseases, mouth infections, constipation, dysecdysis (trouble shedding), prolonged inappetence outside of the cooler months of the year, lethargy, diarrhoea, abnormal movement, and regurgitation.

Quarantine

The length of [quarantine](#) is a contentious area, with many different protocols implemented worldwide. With recent advancements in our understanding of reptile viruses and diseases, we may not be able to 'out-quarantine' some of the newly discovered reptile viruses, which complicates recommending a time frame.



Most reptile veterinarians now recommend a quarantine period of at least six months for newly acquired snakes and in some cases combine with screening tests. Quarantined animals should be kept in a separate room with no shared contact or airspace. Any handling, feeding, or cleaning of the cages should be completed after all the other non-quarantined animals. If further work needs to be done with the rest of the collection after the animals are in quarantine, then a complete change of clothes and a thorough disinfection of hands and any equipment used is recommended.

If you have any further questions about your snake, please don't hesitate to contact your local [Unusual Pet Vets](#) team.

