



## Jungle Fever Care Sheet

### *Brazilian Rainbow Boa*

*This care sheet has been developed by the proprietor through research and personal experience. It is intended to provide information on initial set up and the care that your pet will*

*require. For more in depth advice and information please do not hesitate to discuss your pet further with the staff of Jungle Fever or purchase a specific species book available at Jungle Fever.*

**COMMON NAME:** Brazilian Rainbow Boa Constrictor (Epicrates Cenchria Cenchria)

**NATIVE TO:** South America

**SIZE:** Adults 4 – 6 Feet in length

**LIFE SPAN:** 25 Years

**ENCLOSURES:** The primary requirement for an enclosure is that it is large enough to provide the snake with exercise and that it can retain heat and humidity. Adults like space to roam, so the bigger the enclosure the better. Glass aquariums are not recommended. A larger, custom vivarium would be preferable. They love to climb, so a taller enclosure will give you more opportunity to view your snake climbing around. Screen top cages are generally not recommended because they allow too much evaporation. If the cage has a screen lid it should be partially covered with Plexiglas or a damp towel to help retain humidity.

**SIZE:** Hatchlings will be calmer in a small enclosure such as plastic faunarium. A vivarium of at least 4` x 2` x 2` is the minimum recommended for adults. Be aware that you may need to change the enclosure as the snake grows – a small rainbow boa in a large enclosure will become overwhelmed and stressed.

**UV LIGHTING:** As nocturnal animals, rainbow boas do not need or benefit from UV lighting. Rainbow boas are generally quite and shy and will not appreciate bright lighting. However incandescent red lights can be used to help raise temperature. The red light will be lower wattage allowing the preferred temperature at night. Red lighting at night has the added advantage of letting the animal's movements be seen without disturbing its day/night cycle with bright light.

**HEAT:** Keep the overall enclosure temperature around 80 degrees during the day, with a warmer area between 85 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. At night the temperature should drop to about 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Extended exposure to temperature over 90F can kill rainbow boas.** It is best to start with a temperature gradient centering around 80F (range of 75 to 85F), see where your animal spends most of its time and adjust accordingly. Heat can be provided from a combination of under-tank heat source (heating pad placed under one third to half of the cage) and overhead incandescent light (wattage determined based on size of cage and room temperature).

**HUMIDITY:** The humidity should be kept at about 75-80%. All rainbow boas are extremely sensitive to dehydration and maintenance of high relative humidity is a must. Cages should be misted several times a day and humid shelter should be provided. The humid shelter can be in the form of a plastic box with a hole at one end containing moist sphagnum moss. Pools of water large enough for the animal to soak its entire body in should be provided on both the cooler and the warmer sides of the cage. A relative humidity of 75-80% is ideal. **Much lower than 50% for extended periods and regurgitation and death by dehydration may result.** Rainbow boas will spend most of their time in moist areas, but a dry area should also be present at both ends of the temperature spectrum.

**WATER:** There should be a water dish large enough for the snake to submerge itself, kept filled with clean water. The size of the water dish should increase as the size of the snake increases, and hide boxes and additional water dishes can be added as cage furniture.

**THERMOMETERS:** Thermometers and hydrometers are crucial to maintain the temperature and humidity within the enclosure.

**SUBSTRATE:** Substrates that can be used successfully with rainbow boas include newspaper, paper toweling, bark chippings, Cyprus mulch can be misted to keep the humidity high. A humid box containing damp sphagnum moss will usually be heavily utilized. A large tub of water with a hide box inside will usually be a popular spot too. Substrates should also be replaced or cleaned often.

**CAGE FURNISHINGS:** Provide branches for climbing, hiding spots, and a water dish large enough for the snake to soak in. **Always make sure the furnishings are secure and won't topple over to hurt or kill your animal.** Large rocks need to be secured so the snake cannot burrow underneath and accidentally crush itself to death.

**SANITARY MEASURES:** The high humidity can encourage mold growth, therefore the rainbow boa cages must be kept scrupulously clean, with bedding and moss changed on a regular basis (preferably weekly or whenever soiled). Water dishes should be washed and refilled with fresh water at least twice a week. Sanitary measures are important for your pets health and well being. Faecal matter will need to be cleared on a daily basis and clean substrate added as required. Clean the enclosure weekly with an appropriate cage cleaner made safe for reptile use. Clean furnishings weekly by soaking in hot water and rinsing thoroughly before

placing back into the enclosure. If a bleach solution is used for cleaning, always rinse thoroughly to remove all smell and traces and smell of bleach. Sanitary measures are also important for your health. Always wash your hands with a good antibacterial soap after you have finished cleaning and always wash your hands between enclosures of other animals.

**DIET:** Rainbow boas in captivity eat primarily mice and small rats. Larger specimen may eat medium to large rats. The size of the prey item is determined by the girth of the snake, with the prey about the same size or slightly smaller than the widest portion of the snake. It is recommended that only dead food items be offered every week to 10 days, with sub adults and adult feed every 10 days to two weeks. They are willing feeders and may become obese if allowed to overfeed.

**SUPPLEMENTS:** Generally the rainbow boa will take all of its nutrients from the rodents they eat, however there are vitamin drops available that can be added to the water bowl.

**WATER:** As mentioned above rainbow boas are very sensitive to dehydration, so fresh drinking water must be available at all times along with larger, heated pools for soaking. A large tub placed in the warm end of the enclosure will help raise the relative humidity of the cage and provide a place to soak. Misting the entire cage several times a day will also help maintain a required humidity. Snakes will drink out of any water source present in the cage, so soaking bowls must be as clean as the drinking water.

**HEALTH:** Some Hatchlings will be nippy, but with patience and increasing periods of handling they should calm down. A snake typically sheds its skin about every 6 – 8 weeks (more frequently as juveniles). First the snakes belly tends to turn pinkish and the tail area starts to get rather dull and the eyes will get cloudy and bluish, or even white. A few days later, the snake's eyes will clear and the snake will return to its normal colour and brilliance. The actual shedding of the skin usually occurs 2 – 5 days after the eyes have cleared.

**Please note:** Do not attempt to handle the snake during a shed cycle, as they are virtually blinded and may become defensive/aggressive.

**Please note:** feeding should not be attempted once the eyes start to cloud up or go blue. Feeding may resume after the snake has shed its skin.

It is very important to increase humidity levels during a shed cycle, in order to ensure a complete and one piece shed. Humidity should be increased to when any of these signs are observed. Misting the sides of the enclosure several times a day will help maintain an increased humidity level, as well as adding an additional water bowl to the warm side of the enclosure.

**With good husbandry, housing and conditions as indicated on this care sheet your pet should remain healthy. It will also be helpful to take notes on feeding, sheds and other observations. Any concerns contact your nearest reptile pet.**