



Burmese Pythons

Python bivittatus

ADVANCED · 12–18 FT ADULT · 20–30 YR LIFESPAN · SOUTHEAST ASIA · LACEY ACT LISTED

One of the largest snakes kept in captivity, and one of the few whose care sheet has to open with the law. Burmese pythons are calm, food-motivated giants from the rainforests, mangroves and wetlands of Southeast Asia. A hatchling you can lift in one hand becomes a two-person animal that can top 200 pounds. Federal law bars moving one across state lines, and some states ban them outright. Where you live decides whether you can keep one at all.

AT A GLANCE	
Legal status (US)	Lacey Act injurious species
Ambient temp	80–86 °F day, 75–80 °F night
Basking spot	88–92 °F
Humidity	60–70%
UVB	Low levels beneficial
Diet	Rats, rabbits, chickens (F/T)
Feeding	Every 14–21 days
Adult size	12–18 feet
Lifespan	20–30 years



Captive-bred Burmese pythons start small and do not stay that way. The law, not the price tag, decides who can keep one.

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01

What You're Signing Up For

Their temperament is not the problem. Their size is. These are deliberate snakes with a hard feeding response, and a hatchling grows into an animal two people move. **By 8–10 feet, nobody handles this snake alone, and nobody handles it near food.** The law is the other half. Burmese pythons are listed as injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act, so interstate transport and import are barred, and some states, Florida hardest, restrict or ban keeping. Check state and local law before you buy.

02

Housing by Life Stage

A hatchling starts at 24×18×12 and does better at 36×18×18, but growth here is astonishing: 6+ feet in the first year. Subadults need 96×36×30 at minimum, and an adult needs 144×60×36 to be adequate, with a custom room and pool as the honest target. Racks are conditional for hatchlings and wrong after that. House one snake per enclosure. Two big constrictors will eventually grab the same rat, and that ends one of them. Never release one. The Everglades is what that looks like.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	24×18×12	36×18×18	Astonishing growth rate. Plan the next three enclosures now.
Juvenile	48×24×18	72×24×24	Hits 6+ feet in the first year with proper feeding. No racks.
Subadult	96×36×30	120×48×36	A two-person handling animal from 8–10 feet on. Never work alone.
Adult	144×60×36	Custom room with pool	Can exceed 200 lbs. Regulated or banned in many US states: check yours.

Minimums and preferred footprints from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Horizontal floor space beats height at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Give a big thermal gradient and let the snake choose. Ambient 80–86 °F, a basking surface at 88–92 °F, and a night drop to 75–80 °F. On enclosures this size that usually means radiant heat panels or overhead ceramic elements on a proportional thermostat, never a heat rock and never an unregulated bulb. Low-level UVB is beneficial rather than essential; if you run it, mount it where the snake can move in and out of the light. Check surface temps with an infrared gun, not the dial.

04

Humidity & Water

Hold humidity at 60–70%. These are rainforest, mangrove and wetland snakes, and they drink, soak and shed better with real moisture in the air. Big enclosures dry out fast, so plan for a water container the animal can lie in, and expect to top it off often. Adults do best with a proper pool. Keep the bedding damp, not wet. Soaked substrate causes scale rot, and chronically dry air causes bad sheds and respiratory trouble.

05

Substrate & Enrichment

Cypress mulch or a coconut husk blend holds humidity and takes the weight of a big body without compacting. Skip loose sand and anything dusty. Give hides at both ends of the gradient that the snake actually fits inside, plus something solid to brace against, such as a heavy branch or a low shelf. Big constrictors push, and anything loose becomes a projectile. Spot-clean daily and strip the enclosure on a schedule. Waste from an animal this size will not wait for the weekend.

06

Feeding

Rats, rabbits and chickens, frozen and properly thawed, every 14–21 days. Prey scales with the snake, not with your enthusiasm. A Burmese fed hard grows fast and heavy, and an obese giant is a short-lived giant. Feed in the enclosure, and use a hook to break the link between an opening door and dinner. Never feed a big one alone: a second adult in the room is the safety net. Live prey buys you nothing but risk. Track weight monthly.

07

Health Red Flags

Respiratory infection is the one to know: open-mouth breathing, wheezing, bubbling at the nostrils, or a snake resting with its head raised for hours. Cold or damp housing is usually behind it. Also watch for stuck shed around the eyes and tail, mites in the water bowl, refusal to feed alongside weight loss, and mouth swelling or discharge. Weigh the animal monthly. Those signs mean a reptile vet used to giant constrictors, not a wait-and-see.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual — when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.