

Blood python care guide updated 2026 version

By Essence.pets



Fun fact/history

Blood pythons (*Python brongersmai*) are a fascinating species of snake that often get a bad reputation for being “aggressive”. This however couldn’t be further from the truth: they are very aware of their surroundings and have great feeding responses which if you are inexperienced may lead to **accidental** bites! reptiles **cannot** be aggressive! Only **defensive**: (when they don’t trust you yet) and food response bites: (when hungry or they think you have food lol)

They come from *Southeast Asia*, with native populations in *Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand*. Belonging to the short-tailed python group, they share close ties with the Borneo short-tailed python (*P. breitensteini*) and the Sumatran short-tailed python (*P. curtus*). Out of the three, blood pythons tend to be the most recognized! thanks to their striking colors and their thick, powerful bodies.

Blood pythons are considered crepuscular, meaning they are most active during the low-light hours of dawn and dusk. This is when you are most likely to see them awake and moving around their enclosure.

Lifespan

Blood pythons can live 20–30 years or more, making them a long-term commitment. Potential owners should be prepared for decades of proper care and responsibility.

Size

Blood pythons can get 4-6 feet long! And are extremely heavy bodied!



Quarantine for Blood Pythons: Why and How to Do It Properly

What Is Quarantine?

Quarantine is the process of keeping a new reptile in a separate enclosure away from your other reptiles for a set period of time: usually between 30 and 90 days. If health concerns pop up, that time may need to be extended. This observation period gives you the chance to watch for signs of illness, stress, or parasites before the snake is introduced to a permanent setup or shared space.

Why Quarantine Matters

Even if a snake looks healthy, it could still carry parasites, bacteria, viruses, or fungal infections that take time to show symptoms. Quarantining new reptiles is one of the most important and most overlooked steps in protecting both your new snake and the rest of your reptiles.

Quarantining allows you to:

- Keep your current reptiles safe from potential illnesses
- Monitor the new snake closely for unusual behavior or health problems
- Minimize stress by giving the snake a quiet, simple space to settle in

*Skipping quarantine is one of the **most** common reasons illness spreads in reptile setups, and it's completely avoidable with the right precautions.

What to Watch For During Quarantine

Pay close attention to your blood python's behavior and appearance during this time. Warning signs include:

- Refusing food for long periods (outside of normal 2 week adjustment period when in a new environment)**
- Visible weight loss**
- Mites (tiny black dots on the snake or in the water dish)**
- Noisy breathing: wheezing, clicking, or bubbling sounds**
- Swelling around the mouth, jaw, or face**
- Unusual poop (diarrhea, mucus, blood)**
- Lethargy or constant hiding**

- discolored urates**

Keep daily records of:

- Weight in grams
- Appetite and feeding schedule
- Shed dates
- Stool appearance
- Any concerning symptoms

Quarantine Enclosure Setup

The enclosure should be simple, easy to clean, and allow for close monitoring.

Substrate

- Use paper towels or butcher paper
- Change daily or when soiled
- Makes it easier to spot mites, blood, or unusual waste

Hides

- At least three hides: one on the warm side, one on the cool side, and one additional hide
- Plastic hides are ideal because they're easy to disinfect
- More hides = less stress, as long as they're easy to clean

Water Dish

- Large enough for soaking
- Clean and refill daily

Decor

- Minimal plastic plants or clutter
- Keep it sparse to make cleaning easier and ensure clear visibility

Environmental Conditions

- Basking zone: 88°F
- Ambient temperature: 83°F
- Cool side: 78°F
- Humidity: 60–75%
- Light cycle: Maintain a consistent day/night cycle

Cleaning and Disinfection

Keeping everything clean is **critical** during quarantine.

After handling or cleaning:

- Wash your hands thoroughly
- Disinfect tools before using them with any other animals
- Clean the quarantine enclosure regularly

Recommended Disinfectants:

- Chlorhexidine (diluted) – safe for reptiles
- F10 Veterinary Disinfectant (diluted) – kills viruses, bacteria, and fungi
- Rescue (diluted AHP) – very effective against a wide range of pathogens
- Ivermectin – used for mites but only under a vet’s supervision due to potential toxicity

*Always follow product instructions for proper dilution and contact time.

Handling During Quarantine

- Handle your snake as little as possible to reduce stress
- Always wash your hands between animals! even if they’re all in quarantine!
- Use separate tools, bowls, and supplies for each quarantined animal

Common Health Concerns in Blood Pythons

1. **Obesity**

-Cause: Very common in captivity due to low activity levels and overfeeding due to lack of proper research.

-Signs: Bulging sides, fat rolls near the cloaca, poor muscle tone.

-Prevention: Feed appropriate portion sizes and space out feedings, especially for adults.

2. **Respiratory Infections (RI)**

-Cause: Often results from incorrect temperatures, poor ventilation, or high stress.

-Signs: Wheezing, clicking noises, open-mouth breathing, mucus in nostrils or mouth.

-Prevention: Maintain proper temperature and humidity levels, and reduce stress.

3. **Scale Rot**

-Cause: Bacterial infection from prolonged contact with damp or dirty substrate.

-Signs: Discolored, blistered, or mushy scales, usually on the belly.

-Prevention: Keep the enclosure clean and dry; maintain good hygiene.

4. **Shedding Problems**

-Cause: Low humidity or dehydration.

-Signs: Retained eye caps, stuck shed.

-Prevention: Maintain 60–70% humidity and provide rough surfaces for rubbing.

5. **Mites**

-Cause: Especially common in pet store-bought or wild-caught animals.

-Signs: Small black dots moving between scales, excessive soaking.

-Treatment: Use reptile-safe miticides and fully sanitize the enclosure.

6. **Internal Parasites**

-Cause: More common in wild-caught or poorly sourced snakes.

-Signs: Weight loss despite normal feeding, regurgitation, abnormal feces.

-Diagnosis: Fecal testing by an exotic veterinarian.

After Quarantine

Once your snake:

-Eats consistently

-Sheds normally

-Produces healthy stool

-Shows no signs of illness

...then it's finally ready to move into its permanent enclosure and be housed near other reptiles: Not cohabitation but like in the same proximity of other reptiles in the room (stacking enclosures)

Enclosure information

A minimum for a blood python would be: 4x2x2-6x3x2 depending on how large your blood python gets! (Length of snake X half snake length for width X half snake length for climbing opportunities.)

Enclosure Options: Providing a secure and durable enclosure for a heavy-bodied blood python can be challenging. Here are some reliable options:

- Gorilla Grow tents
- Dubia enclosures
- Custom-built enclosures
- Kages

When selecting an enclosure, focus on sturdiness and escape-proof design to safely accommodate the strength and size of these snakes.

Substrate

Best substrate for a blood python after quarantine:

Blood pythons thrive with a relatively deep substrate layer, ideally around **6–8 inches thick**. These snakes enjoy **burrowing**, so providing ample bedding not only encourages their natural behaviors but also helps maintain proper humidity levels in the enclosure. Suitable substrate options include:

-organic topsoil, play sand, sphagnum moss, and forest floor blends (more affordable and long lasting option)

-Commercial choices such as Zoo Med Reptisoil mixed with forest floor and moss, or Zilla Jungle Mix, can also be effective.

Hides

Providing appropriately sized hides is essential for blood pythons, as they need secure spaces to reduce stress and feel safe. Some of the best options for large snakes include modified cat litter boxes (cut a hole in a litter box and flip it upside down, then file the hole area till smooth to avoid cuts), XXL BlackBox hides (off Amazon), and extra-large cork rounds (look at your local reptile store, expos, or online). These choices give the snake plenty of room to coil comfortably while still offering the snug, secure environment they prefer.

Clutter

Incorporating sturdy plants into a blood python's enclosure adds both enrichment and visual cover, helping the snake feel secure. Both artificial and live plants can be used, but they should be durable enough to withstand the snake's weight and movement. Heavier artificial plants are low-maintenance, while robust live plants can improve humidity and provide a more naturalistic environment.

Enrichment

Enrichment is an important part of blood python care, as it encourages natural behaviors and keeps the snake engaged in its environment. Some effective options include providing sturdy **branches** for **climbing**, **deep substrate** for **burrowing**, and **durable dog toys** (such as rubber tires) for the snake to explore. If your enclosure has a solid top, you can also hang enrichment items from **chains**. **Custom backgrounds** and **thick braided ropes** secured to the top of the enclosure can add both **climbing** opportunities and **visual** interest.

Water bowls

Water bowls for blood pythons should be large enough for the snake to soak in if it chooses. Soaking can support proper hydration and assist with shedding. The bowl should also be sturdy and heavy enough that the snake cannot easily push it around or tip it over.

Lighting

Like many other snakes, blood pythons can benefit from UVB lighting. While they are not strictly dependent on it, providing UVB supports overall health by aiding in *vitamin D3 synthesis* and *calcium metabolism*. Recommended options include the **Zoo Med Reptisun 5.0 T5** or the **Arcadia ShadeDweller 6% UVB**, both of which provide gentle, appropriate levels of exposure.

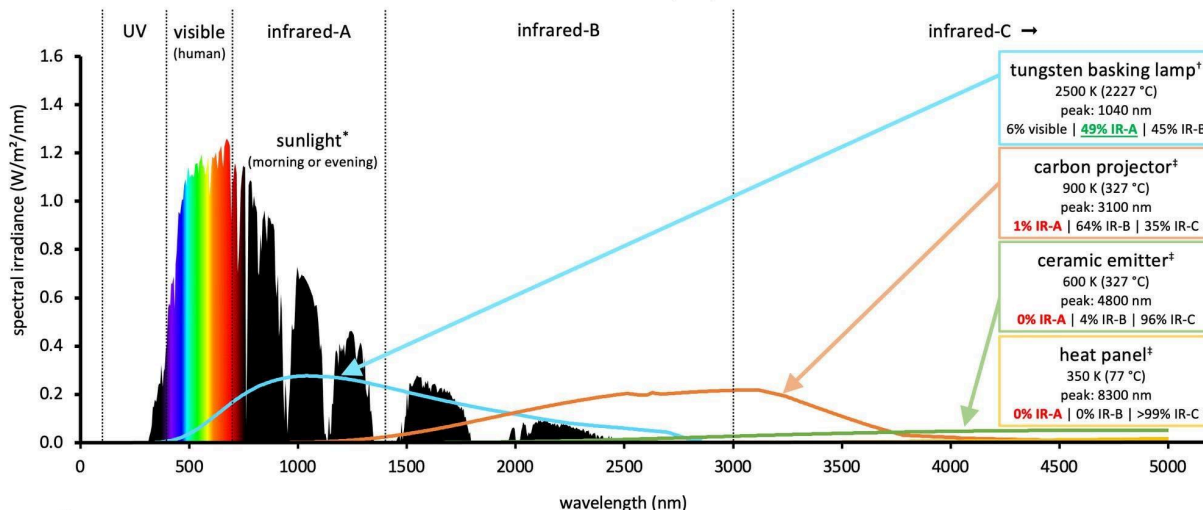
humidity

Blood pythons do best with moderate to high humidity, kept between **60–75%**. Misting the enclosure a few times daily can help, and an automatic misting system is an option as long as it's cleaned regularly. A deep, well-mixed substrate is one of the most reliable ways to hold humidity: aim for a proper substrate consistency: that's damp enough to clump without being soggy. Large water bowls and hardy live plants can further support a stable, healthy humidity level.

Heating

Replicating solar infrared: a spectral comparison

Quentin Dishman (2024)



NOTES:

* air mass 3.0 = 19.3° elevation = 70.7° zenith; aerosol optical depth at 500 nm: 0.1; total precipitable water: 2 g/cm²; irradiance: 783 W/m²

† scaled to ISM400 reading: 300 W/m² (true irradiance: 358 W/m²)

‡ scaled to same irradiance as above

Blood pythons require proper heating to thrive, with a basking bulb that emits both IRA and IRB radiation, such as Arcadia halogen basking bulbs. Only use white bulbs! colored bulbs are unnatural, do not provide the correct type of heat, and should **never** be used at night. Blood pythons benefit from a natural day-night cycle, with complete darkness at night to regulate activity patterns.

Avoid using under-tank heat mats, as they primarily emit IRC heat, which is unnatural and ineffective for reptiles; snakes naturally burrow to escape heat, so heating from beneath the substrate is not ideal. Ceramic heat emitters (CHEs) should not be the main heat source either, as they also produce only IRC heat. However, CHEs can be useful at night if the ambient temperature drops too low, since they provide heat without light.

All heating elements should be controlled with thermostats to maintain safe, consistent temperatures, as blood pythons are a cooler-adapted species compared to many other snakes.

temperatures

Blood pythons require carefully maintained temperatures within their enclosure. The basking area should reach around **88°F** (31°C) but should not exceed this, while the cooler side of the enclosure should remain around **78°F** (25°C) or lower. Warm ambient air temperatures should be maintained near **83°F** (28°C) to provide a comfortable gradient for thermoregulation.

To ensure accurate temperatures in a blood python's enclosure, use an infrared thermometer gun to measure the *basking* spot. The hot and cool sides should be monitored with a digital thermometer with probes for precise readings, helping maintain a proper thermal gradient for the snake's health and comfort.

Diet

Blood pythons have a naturally slow metabolism and do not require constant large meals to stay healthy. Overfeeding or an improper feeding schedule can easily lead to obesity. Recommended feeding frequencies are:

- Hatchlings: every 1–2 weeks
- Juveniles: every 2–3 weeks
- Subadults: every 4–6 weeks
- Adults: every 6–8 weeks

Individual growth rates can vary, so it's important to regularly weigh your snake and adjust prey size as needed. Prey should typically be 10–15% of the snake's body weight to ensure proper nutrition without overfeeding.

Blood pythons primarily consume rodents, with rats being the most common and recommended option. Depending on size and nutritional needs, small rabbits or quail can also be offered as a variety in food sources.

Temperament

Blood pythons can be defensive or unpredictable, particularly when **young**. It's recommended to begin gentle training early to help them acclimate to handling, to trusting you, and to their environment. Techniques such as *tap training*, *hook training*, and *noise desensitization* can help reduce stress and improve the snake's comfort with human interaction over time.

Handleability

Blood pythons benefit from regular, gentle handling to become accustomed to human interaction. Keep in mind that they are very strong and can be heavy, which may be tiring over time. Always exercise caution when handling a full-grown blood python and consider having a "spotter" present to assist if needed, ensuring both your safety and the snake's well-being.

Availability

Blood pythons are moderately accessible, though availability can vary depending on location and source. Be aware that some may be wild-caught (WC), which can carry parasites and require extra care. Whenever possible, consider adopting or rescuing a blood python before purchasing from a breeder or reseller.

Harmful misinformation

Blood pythons are often labeled as “mean snakes” within the reptile hobby, but this is largely a misunderstanding. They are naturally shy and defensive behaviors are often a result of improper care, including incorrect enclosure parameters, inadequate hides, or poor decor. By providing proper housing, temperature, humidity, and enrichment (as outlined in this guide) you can help ensure your blood python remains healthy, comfortable, less stressed, and more trusting of you.

Dm on insta if you have any concerns!

@essence.pets