



## Red-Tail Boa Care Sheet

### About

Red-Tail Boas are widely considered one of the most tame, friendly and manageable snakes on the market. If properly cared for, any Red-Tail Boa will very rarely strike or even become defensive, unless you give them a reason to. Most of the time, they will never feel an urge to attack or become defensive if they are being cared for properly. On top of all of that, they are among the most beautiful and gentle snakes you'll ever encounter.

The name "Red-Tail Boa" is a loosely used term to describe the genus/specie Boa Constrictor. Most localities of Red-Tail Boa have a bright red tail compared to the rest of their body, and it will depend on which specie, subspecies and locality they are. Some Boa Constrictors have little or no red on their tails, but they are still loosely called "Red-Tail Boas".

Depending on what type of Red-Tail Boa you have, they can reach anywhere from 4-12 feet in length, as adults. This also depends on the subspecies and genetics of your Red-Tail Boa. It's very rare for a Red-Tail Boa to reach 12 feet. A maximum length of 7 to 10 feet is more common.

Depending on the genetics of the snake, it's normal for a Red-Tail Boa to grow 2 feet per year. When they are born, they are usually 15-18 inches in length (depending on what subspecies it is), and they will grow on an average of about 2 inches per month. Again, this is all dependent on their genes and scientific classification.

average lifespan for a Red-Tail Boa that dies from natural causes, is anywhere from 15-25 years. On rare occasions they will top the 30 year mark. It all depends on how well the snake is cared for. 25 years is definitely reasonable if the animal is properly cared for and remains healthy throughout its life.

### Care

Snakes use their tongues to both smell, and determine what is in their vicinity. Their sense of smell is both their strongest and the sense they rely the most on for basic survival skills. It's also useful in determining an appetizing meal from an unappetizing one, and determining whether something is even food or not.

They do not need any type of UV light to obtain essential vitamins. They are naturally burrowers and ground dwellers, and will rarely see the sun in the wild. They do, however, need some type of light and dark cycle in captivity, to keep their "biological" clock in tune.

For a baby Red-Tail Boa, a 20Long (20 gallons, roughly 24"x10"x12") will do just fine. It's easier to keep Red-Tail Boas in smaller enclosures while they are younger to assure proper heating and hot spots for such a small snake. A good rule of thumb to use is to keep the length of the tank about the same length as the snake, so they can stretch from one side to the other without any problems. Once the Red-Tail Boa reaches about 3 feet, it's a good idea to move it into something around a 40-gallon tank, or a 4-foot Boaphile cage/tank would work. Once the Boa is around 4 or 5 feet, it's a good idea to move it into a "breeder" size tank, which is something about 6 feet long, 2 feet deep and 2 feet tall.

Every Red-Tail Boa should have a water dish, regularly supplied with fresh water, that is big enough for them to coil their entire body into. They should also have one hide on each side (cool and warm) and at least one item to crawl up and perch on, for exercise sake.

You can use pretty much whatever you want, and whatever your Red-Tail Boa will fit into. I've seen anything from a pet store used (even fish aquarium stuff), cardboard boxes, toilet paper roll tubes... pretty much anything, as long as you're sure it's free of chemicals or other harmful materials. Sometimes the snake will just hide in the substrate, and this is fine.

You should assure something in your tank is a little rigid or rock-like to help the Red-Tail Boa shed. Usually reptile water dishes or hides will be just fine. However, don't use anything that is really rough or sharp. Lots of fish/aquarium equipment is like that. Your snake won't like it and he/she could get cut while climbing on it.

The better term for this is "substrate", if you're unfamiliar with snakes. Any of the following are okay to use: Newspaper, Aspen shavings, Cypress Mulch, Paper Towels, Astroturf. Just as a quick warning; **DO NOT USE CEDAR OR PINE BARK!!!** These two woods have a certain chemical in them that is harmful to a snake's respiratory system and will eventually kill them! If you are using cypress or aspen, spread it to about 1 inch in thickness across the tank, and set your under-tank heater (UTH) to around "medium". Please, also do not use sand, dirt, or any other substrate you might think of. Choose from one of the appropriate substrates of Newspaper, Aspen, Cypress, Paper Towels or Astroturf. I would personally recommend newspaper as it's usually free in the mail, makes for very easy cleanup, and won't house little bugs called "mites" that are very bad for your snake.

Every snake needs to thermo regulate (control their body temperature manually), and every kind of Boa ABSOLUTELY needs heat in order for it to digest food... otherwise, the snake will die from not eating or from undigested food becoming

toxic. Every snake should be able to set their own body temperature, as they are cold-blooded, and their body temperature is the same as the temperature around them. For a Red-Tail Boa, you should make one end of the tank a warm side, and one end a cool side. The easiest way to do this is to find something that will heat the warm side, and the cool side shouldn't need additional heating.

For heating, you should NEVER USE A HEAT ROCK! If you are using one, remove it from the tank immediately. The reason behind this is heat rocks have imbalanced and very poor heating distribution. On parts of the rock it could be 70F while on another part it could be 130F. IF YOU USE A HEAT ROCK YOU WILL BURN AND POSSIBLY KILL YOUR SNAKE. Please, do not use one.

One last tidbit before we get into what you need to heat your tank: ALWAYS make sure you test the snake's environment thoroughly before you place him/her in there! This is vital! You do not want to stress your Boa out as much as it already will be from the move.

Feeding ONE appropriately sized RAT (not mouse) every feeding period is the smartest way to raise your boa. For Boas that are 1 year and younger, feed them once per week. For Boas that are 1-2 years, every 10 days is appropriate. Boas that are over 2 years, every 14 days is sufficient. If you feed too much or too little, you may cause irreversible damage to your boa and literally take years off its lifespan.

<http://redtailboafaq.com>