Introduction to Ball Pythons

Description
Ball Pythons (Python Regius) are small to medium snakes that are native to open grassland and scrub forests in Central and Western Africa. Named after their tendency to retreat into a ‘ball’ when frightened, one of the most common and popular snakes in the hobby, and have been bred in several different morphs.

Sexing
Difficult to sex; females tend to be much larger than males. Sex determination by probing is the only reliable way to determine sex; probes easily pass to 5-6 subcaudal scales in males and females only 2-3. Probing is only recommended to performed by a veterinarian. Males will evert their hemipenes when manually expressed, but this is not recommended because it can lead to prolapse.

Size
Large females can reach lengths of 6 ft in length; average lengths are 3-4.5 ft. Typically weigh 800-1500 g.

Diet
Notoriously finicky and inconsistent eaters, particularly during the winter months. Feed young ball pythons a prey item not more than twice the diameter of the thickest portion of its body every 7-10 days. Feed mature ball pythons every 10-14 days. Some hobbyist only feed large prey items once a month. Offer freshly killed or frozen prey of appropriate size such as rats, mice or other small mammals.

Temperature
Rely on the outside temperatures to regulate their own body temperature. Ensure ambient temperatures of 75-85 °F with a basking spot of around 95 °F. Temperatures should never drop below 70°F. Two thermometers should be used to monitor temperatures.

Lighting
Nocturnal and do not require access to ultraviolet B (UVB) rays to metabolize Vitamin D3 and Calcium. Lighting is largely for viewing of ball pythons and is not required.

Humidity
Thrive best at humidity levels of 60-70%. Improper humidity will lead to chronic poor sheds and possible respiratory infections. Maintain humidity by misting the enclosure several times per day and appropriate bedding like compressed coconut fiber and wood bark bedding. Measure humidity levels with a hygrometer.