herpy

SNAKES

Central American Boa

Boa imperator

Boa imperator is a heavily built boa from Central America and north-western South America, brown to grey with dark saddle markings and a tail that often turns reddish towards the tip. Young animals climb, adults live mostly on the ground. It reaches 130-250 cm, is active at dusk and at night and lives 20-30 years. It requires a large enclosure, infrequent, small meals and a keeper who can take responsibility for decades.

Family: Boidae Former name: *Boa constrictor imperator*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**130-250 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**20-30 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert, dry forest and rainforest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**180 × 90 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-30 °C**
Basking spot	**30-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**55-75%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Live-bearing**
Sexually mature	**18-48 months**
Litter size	**10-65 young**
Gestation	**100-120 days**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
An adult animal needs an enclosure of at least 180 × 90 × 90 cm (length × width × height), and larger and taller is clearly better.

TEMPERATURE
The species needs a gradient from cool to warm. The air at the basking spot should be 30-32 °C and the cool end 24-26 °C, and the whole enclosure should contain zones between 24 and 32 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER
Humidity should be 55-75 % and fluctuate a little. Briefly above 70 % does no harm if the enclosure is allowed to dry out, whereas persistent damp causes mould. Before a shed, 75-85 % can help the animal to shed in one piece.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species is crepuscular and nocturnal, so it does not need strong light, but UVB is recommended. It belongs to Ferguson zone 2: occasional sun-basking. The target is a UV index of 2-3 at the basking spot.

FEEDING
B. imperator is a carnivore and must be given whole prey. Young animals get mice and small rats, and adults get rats, young rabbits, guinea pigs, chicks and quail. Variety is healthy.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
B. imperator is an intelligent, individual snake. Many animals tolerate and like handling, but some prefer to be left in peace.

NATIVE RANGE
Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Ecuador.