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SNAKES

Rainbow Boa

Epicrates cenchria

Epicrates cenchria is a slender, iridescent boa from the rainforests of South America, with an orange to red base colour, black rings and a sheen like oil on water. It grows to 150-200 cm, is nocturnal and calm as an adult, but needs very high humidity, steady warmth and a large enclosure. The species has been split into several species, and many rainbow boas in the trade belong to the separated ones.

Family: Boidae Former name: *Boa cenchria; Epicrates cenchris*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**150-200 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**20-30 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna and rainforest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**180 × 90 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-29 °C**
Basking spot	**29-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-24 °C**
Humidity	**70-100%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Live-bearing**
Sexually mature	**30-48 months**
Litter size	**1-30 young**
Gestation	**104-135 days**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult *Epicrates cenchria* needs a terrarium of at least 180 × 90 × 90 cm (length × width × height). A good rule of thumb for a semi-arboreal snake is that the length equals the snake's full length and the width half of it.

TEMPERATURE

By day there should be 24-29 °C in the terrarium with a basking spot of 29-32 °C at one end, and at night 22-24 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Epicrates cenchria dries out easily and is entirely dependent on high humidity. Keep it at about 70 % by day and 90-100 % at night. Juveniles under one year are more delicate and need 90-100 % around the clock.

LIGHTING AND UVB

E. cenchria is nocturnal, but needs a fixed day and night rhythm with 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness, controlled by a timer.

FEEDING

Epicrates cenchria eats mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, quail, chicks and small guinea pigs. Preferably offer frozen and thawed animals rather than live ones, and warm the prey to about 38 °C in a sealed bag in warm water.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

E. cenchria is relatively calm as an adult, but it does not like being petted and is easily stressed if handled for too long. Young are nervous and bite easily, and they become more relaxed when they are about a year old.

NATIVE RANGE

French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina.