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SNAKES

Carpet Python

Morelia spilota

Morelia spilota is a powerful, semi-arboreal python with a very wide distribution in Australia and southern New Guinea. The pattern varies from bands and blotches to black and yellow markings, and the size from about 120 to 300 cm depending on the subspecies. It becomes calm with age and thrives in a large, tall enclosure, but it grows large and lives for 20-30 years.

Family: Pythonidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**120-300 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**20-30 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna, dry forest and rainforest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**150 × 75 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Basking spot	**32-38 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-25 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**10-50 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**50-55 days** at 31-32 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult *Morelia spilota* needs an enclosure of at least 150 × 75 × 90 cm. This suits the smaller subspecies of 1.5-2 m. For the larger ones, up to 3 m, the enclosure must be at least 200 × 100 × 90 cm.

TEMPERATURE

The enclosure must have a clear gradient. The surface under the heat lamp should be 32-38 °C, the cool end 24-26 °C and the night 22-25 °C. The smaller *M. s. cheynei* from the rainforest manages with 29-33 °C under the lamp.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The species is not fussy about humidity and copes with a wide range. Keep it at 40-60 % with a large bowl of fresh water. A hide with damp sphagnum helps during shedding.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is mainly nocturnal, but can be active by day. UVB is not necessary to keep it alive, but it is recommended, because it supports D3 absorption and the daily rhythm.

FEEDING

Morelia spilota eats whole prey animals. Use frozen and thawed mice and rats, not live, and warm them to about 38 °C. Hamsters, gerbils, quail and chicks can be used for variety.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Morelia spilota is inquisitive and active and usually gets used to handling well. Juveniles under 1-2 years are often nervous and bite; they calm down with age.

NATIVE RANGE

Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.