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FEEDING YOUR BALL PYTHON

Ball pythons are one of the best beginner snakes in the pet trade today. They have earned this title because they are calm and docile, with easy husbandry needs, not because of their feeding habits. They can be VERY picky eaters. It can prove difficult to successfully get a ball python to eat frozen/thawed mice or rats, but not impossible.

It is not uncommon for a ball python to go without food for a few months. This may not necessarily be due to the snake not being hungry, but it could refuse to eat for a number of reasons. I have had ball pythons that don't want to eat during the winter, but they usually continue to feed normally once the temperatures increase again. Ball Pythons will refuse to eat if the temperature in their enclosure is not warm enough. The slightest change in temperatures, too hot, too cold, upgrading enclosures, changing habitat decor or even just the placement of the tank, could all upset a ball python into not eating.

It may sometimes be necessary for you to have to force feed them to get them started again. I have heard stories of ball pythons losing a lot of weight, even after just six months of not eating. A veterinarian has told a customer to begin force feeding when this happened. In some cases, force feeding is the only option to get your ball python to eat again, but this should not be attempted unless you know what you're doing. Force feeding a snake is not the best option, but if the snake starts to lose weight, and still refuses to eat, it may be something that you want to consider in order to keep your pet alive. It is best that you use smaller frozen/thawed food items than what your snake usually consumes. It's just easier to swallow.

You can, also, look at what you're feeding. If your snake is used to eating frozen and then stops eating, you could try feeding him freshly killed food items. This way, the rat or mouse is still naturally warm, but is dead or at least stunned so it can't hurt the snake.

Before trying fresh killed, you can try dipping the frozen/thawed food items in tuna juice or even chicken broth (tuna juice works better). Pat it down so it doesn't drip juice, and then offer it to the snake. In many cases, this is a good way to get the snake to start eating. Once the snake is eating regularly, you can start thawing out the frozen feeder regularly without the juice.

The biggest thing that you, or any ball python owner, must figure out is your pet snake's tastes. I know it sounds funny, but sometimes that's the case.

****WARNING****

DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, FEED YOUR BALL PYTHON LIVE FOOD ITEMS! NOT ONLY IS IT ILLEGAL, BUT ALSO HUGELY IRRESPONSIBLE AS YOU RISK HAVING YOUR PET SNAKE BITTEN.