

CREATURE CARE SHEET

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Jungle Carpet Python *Morelia spilota cheynei*

The Jungle carpet python is possibly the most beautiful of all the so-called carpet pythons. Their colour and patterning can be almost breathtaking, especially the black & gold variety which are selectively bred to accentuate the bright yellows and lustrous blacks.

The Jungle Carpet is a medium sized python which is slender & graceful in appearance. It has a thin neck & a head that is said to resemble that of a dragon. Adults reach an average length of 5.5 - 6.6 feet but specimens have been found that have exceeded a little over 8 feet. Hatchlings are dull little snakes, monochrome miniatures of their parents.

They are quite slow growing & develop their adult colouration at about 2 years of age. Jungles come in a variety colours shades but initially they are patterned in rings & zigzags of light & dark areas. The light areas can vary from cream through to bright yellow (gold). Even lime greenish yellow is not unusual. The dark areas vary from brown to black. It is the black & gold variety that are the most sought after.

Adults are normally sexually mature at 4 years of age, with females being larger than the males. They do darken in colour with age due to melanin forming in the pale areas of pattern. Females seem to darken more drastically than males & specimens have been known to turn almost black. This is one species where no mutations such as loss of colour or pattern have been found. Their UK availability is strictly limited to captive bred specimens.

Distribution:

The Jungle Carpet Python is found in the tropical rainforests of Queensland, north-eastern Australia.

Housing:

Adults ideally need 5-6 square feet of floor space. Each vivarium should be equipped with 2 cork bark hides (one in the cool end & one in the hot end), a climbing branch (that's fixed diagonally across the length of the of the vivarium) & a ceramic water bowl (placed in the centre & refilled every other day). Use aspen bedding about 1cm deep which is spot cleaned daily & changed every 6 weeks. You can use ceramic heaters to obtain a 30 - 25°C thermal gradient & maintain a 12/12 photo period with 50% humidity all year round. At shedding times you can raise the humidity to 70% .

Being semi-arboreal, we feel it is important to offer Jungles some kind of perch. Ours utilise theirs for about 80% of the time during the day and are nearly always on their branch when the lights are turned on in the morning. Fixing the branch diagonally allows them to use it to thermoregulate. A light guard it an absolute must with Jungle Carpets. They just love to wrap themselves around anything suspended from the roof, if there's an exposed bulb, they'll find it! The guard mesh also needs to be of a very small gauge. 10mm is good for adults but juveniles, believe it or not, can squeeze through. For them use 5mm or divide the 10mm squares in the mesh with additional wire like plastic coated gardening wire.

Feeding:

It is likely that these snakes will prefer mice to rats. Hatchlings will take fuzzies after a little

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coaxing. It is important that the food is offered warm & for the first feed "popping" the prey's head may be necessary to instigate a feeding response.

Jungles tend to eat smaller prey than other snakes of equal size, this is mainly due to their small necks. Juveniles will readily feed on small mice, gradually progressing onto x-large mice by 3-4 years of age. It is a distinct advantage if specimens can be converted to take rats as larger jungles may need multiple mice to sustain them, where a weaner rat would suffice. An aversion to rats seems to be inbuilt from birth. Some will take to rats and others won't no matter how much you try. You can defrost your mice in Luke warm water & then briefly soak them in hotter water, to warm them up, directly before feeding.

All our Jungles strike feed and are really good eaters all year round. Occasionally they can go off their food in the winter but this is not unusual with adults & tends to be the preference of individual specimens.

Summary:

The Jungle Carpet Python is one of the easiest pythons to keep. The only factor that would deter a 'beginners snake' recommendation is their snappy juvenile temperament. This really is one snake 'where you get what you pay for.' All hatchlings & yearlings will be grey & black in colour so you need to know what the parents look like.