

## A Guide to Feeding Snakes



There is always a range of information provided to reptile owners about how to feed correctly. Here are some tips that we have used successfully over a number of years.

This guide is by no means comprehensive, but offers useful tips. Always take your own circumstances into consideration, and for more information, contact your nearest Reptile Store or Specialised Vet.

### Step 1

Put together a box large enough to hold the snake. This can be a dark plastic tub or something similar.

### Step 2

Before feeding, take your snake out of its enclosure and put the snake in the prepared container. Changing environments in this way can limit aggression, and may reduce the chance of the snake striking your hand as you feed.

### Step 3

Place the prey in the feeding environment and wait until the snake is done eating.

### Step 4

When the snake has finished eating, remove it from the box and put it back in its habitat. Try to handle the snake minimally when moving them back to their cage. Too much handling of a snake that has just eaten can lead to regurgitation and interrupted digestion.

### Handy Tips

- Feed prey that is no longer alive, as this reduces the risk of injury to the snake.
- Don't feed anything bigger than the widest point of your snake's head.
- Most snakes kept as pets should be fed mice or rats. Only the larger snake species will need to be fed bigger animals like rabbits or quails.
- The best way to know how much and how often you should feed your snake is by making sure you learn as much as you can about your selected snake species.

- The typical feeding schedule for snakes tends to be once a week to three weeks, with the most common being from 10-14 days (This is only a guide as many other Herpetoculturists have different feeding regimes). Feeding your snake too frequently can lead to a shorter life span.

Every now and again you may encounter a snake that just won't eat. There are a number of possible reasons for this:

- The snake might be about to shed. Snakes typically don't eat during this time. Even if it's time for your snake to be fed, wait until the snake has shed before offering food. It's advised to limit handling your snake during its preparation to shed. (Shedding is generally shown by an opaque colour over the eyes)
- The current environment might not be appropriate for your snake. The most common environment problems are humidity and temperature. Snakes are cold blooded and depend on their environment for heat, so make sure you know what the temperature range for your snake should be and keep it's habitat in that range. (This may require some homework). If your snake is from a tropical region, provide the appropriate level of humidity. This is a common error, and easily avoided with a little homework.
- The temperature of the prey item is important as well. Warm up the food with slightly warm to the touch water, making sure its fully defrosted. Dry the prey item, then feed immediately, so that the prey item is still slightly warm.
- Know what time of day your snake prefers to eat. Many snakes are nocturnal, so they'll be most likely to eat at night. If you're feeding your snake in the middle of the day, and it's refusing to eat, then try feeding the snake later in the evening.

Finally, if you just can't get your snake to eat, and its environment is appropriate, then you may need to take your snake to a specialised vet.