



MY FIRST BREEDING SUCCESS WITH ROYAL PYTHONS

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■ INTRODUCTION

I bought my female royal python on the 6th March, 1994. She had lovely golden markings and I soon parted with my cash. After a month of on/off feeding she soon settled down in her new home (2' x 2' x 2' cage) and began feeding regularly on thawed mice.

On the 6th August, 1994 I bought a similar sized male. I suspect the male was imported because he was darker than the female and had a few ticks, which were removed. The next problem was feeding - he would not take mice alive or dead and this went on for two months, despite trying all the standard tricks with no success. Then someone suggested day old chicks and, after three offerings, he finally ate one. As we all know, chicks on their own are not a great food source so I tried scenting mice. This was unsuccessful so, to get some mice down him, I tied a mouse to a chick and he ate both.

This went on for two years until he started taking mice on their own. Now he feeds well.

■ BREEDING

After reading several books on royal pythons I decided to attempt to breed them. In October 1995 the female stopped feeding and I decided to try temperature cycling, dropping the temperature from 86 - 88°F to approximately 76°F at night and raising the temperature to the mid 90's during the day. They were housed separately in 2' x 2' x 2' cages and introduced at regular periods. The cages were sprayed heavily during this time but no matings were observed. The male continued feeding throughout the winter and the female started feeding again at the beginning of May.

The female was fed heavily during the summer, taking approximately three adult mice a week. The male was fed approximately one adult mouse a week. I decided not to try temperature cycling this year, but to leave the temperature at 86 - 88°F continually. Again in October the female stopped feeding and the male stopped in November. At this time the female was placed with the male and the cages sprayed



Python regius

regularly. The pair were left together during October and November and were seen mating often. The female sloughed on the 13th April 1997 and laid three healthy looking eggs on the 19th May 1997.

■ EGG INCUBATION

The eggs were placed in vermiculite mixed with an equal amount water, by weight, and placed in an incubator with a temperature of 88 - 90°F. I did not have to spray the eggs because the humidity stayed at approxima-

tely 90%. The box the eggs were placed in was clear plastic so they could be observed without disturbance, and the lid had four small air holes for ventilation. On about the July 16, 1997, the first egg hatched, and the last one appeared on the July 19. They sloughed after about two weeks and fed on 'furry' mice straight away.

All the books I read stated that hatchlings were docile but my three were very aggressive and would bite readily.

Photo by C.M. Langeveld



Python regius, eating a rat

■ CONCLUSION

Royal Pythons are beautiful snakes but can sometimes be problematic to feed. If you keep trying, however, most problems can be overcome. I hope this article will encourage other keepers of royal pythons to try and breed them; the more we breed them then, hopefully, there will be less need for traders to import them.

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