

Dumeril's Boa (*Acrantophis dumerili*)

Difficulty: Intermediate

Dumeril's boas are a terrestrial species of constricting snake native to southern Madagascar. Although they are native to the dry forests and spiny thickets of this area, these snakes rarely climb, preferring to spend most of their time on the ground.

Dumeril's boas are 4-8' snakes, with males tending to be significantly smaller than females. They tend to have a long, muscular body, a reddish tan and brown pattern, and a pale belly. Their pattern is speculated to have evolved as camouflage for living among leaf litter.

Dumeril's boas aren't ideal snakes for first-time keepers, and they're not particularly common in the USA. They can be a little on the large side, as far as snakes go, and they can be particular about their husbandry. However, they're slow-moving and generally tolerate humans well enough. With good care, Dumeril's boas live 15-20 years or longer.

Shopping List

- 6'L x 3'W x 3'H front-opening reptile enclosure, or larger
- Dual dome heat lamp with ceramic sockets, x2
 - OR ceramic bulb sockets, x4
- 75-90w halogen flood heat bulbs, x4
- Rheostat, x2
- Digital thermometer/hygrometer device with probes
- Infrared thermometer ("temperature gun")
- 34" T5 HO forest UVB bulb (Arcadia or Zoo Med brand)
- 36" T5 HO light fixture with reflector
- 48" T5 HO ~6500K plant grow lights, x2
- 2 gallon pressure sprayer
- Power strip with digital timer
- 180 qts humidity-friendly substrate
- Leaf litter
- Sphagnum moss
- Black plastic hide box, x1
- Other reptile hides/caves (at least 1)
- Environmental enrichment items (hollow logs, sturdy branches, live/fake plants, etc.)
- Large water bowl
- Feeding tongs, at least 12"
- Veterinary disinfectant

Housing

Dumeril's boa terrarium size requirements correlate with the size of the snake. Here's the minimum dimensions for your snake's enclosure, based on snake length:

- Baby (<2') — 2'L x 1.5'W x 1.5'H
- Juvenile to Subadult (2' to 5') — 4'L x 2'W x 2'H
- Adult (6' to 8') — 6'L x 2'W x 2'H
- Large adult (>8') — 8'L x 2'W x 2'H

A good rule of thumb for Dumeril's boa enclosure dimensions is that the length and width should add up to equal or greater than the snake's length. Offering more space to your snake will allow for better thermoregulation, fitness, and general welfare.

Dumeril's boas are highly terrestrial, so floor space is more important than vertical space. That being said, you still want a minimum of 24"/60cm of height to allow for sufficient substrate depth, low climbing objects, and safe distancing between heat and UVB lamps.

Can multiple Dumeril's boas be housed together?

Dumeril's boas are not social animals, and there is no significant benefit to the animal that would justify keeping two or more in the same enclosure. In fact, keeping multiple Dumeril's boas together can cause competition for food, warmth, hiding places, and other resources, which is likely to prevent the snakes from thriving. So it's best to keep only one per enclosure.

Lighting & UVB

Dumeril's boas are crepuscular, which means that they are most active at night, particularly around sunset. Many people attempt to use this fact to argue that these snakes do not benefit from, and are even stressed by, the presence of light in their environment. However, providing a light source is important to helping regulate their day/night cycle and associated hormonal rhythms. UVB lighting has also been proven to be beneficial to snake health. So although they can technically survive without UVB light, we strongly recommend providing it in order to promote optimum welfare in captivity.

UVB Lighting

UVB lighting can be tricky, because in order to get the right strength of UVB (UV Index, or UVI), distance and potential mesh obstruction must be considered. To provide appropriate UVB in a single 48" x 24" x 24" Dumeril's boa enclosure, you will need a 22" T5 HO Zoo Med Reptisun 5.0 or Arcadia D3+ Forest 6% bulb, placed on the warm side of the enclosure, preferably not obstructed by mesh.

The basking area should be placed as follows:

- UVB mounted over mesh: basking area 9-11" below UVB lamp
- UVB mounted under mesh: basking area 15-18" below UVB lamp

(These recommendations are approximations based on available data. For best results, use a Solarmeter 6.5 to determine the best placement to achieve a UVI of 2.0-3.0 in the basking area.)

Heating

Humans are *warm-blooded*, which means that our body temperature is automatically regulated.

Dumeril's boas, however, are *cold-blooded*, which means that they have to move between areas of different temperatures in order to regulate their body temperature. Dumeril's boas warm up by sleeping in warm burrows or even in patches of sunlight. In captivity, using a halogen flood heat bulb is the best way to replicate the type of warmth provided by sunlight.

- **Basking surface temperature:** 86-88°F (30-31°C)
- **Cool zone/nighttime temperature:** 70-75°F (21-24°C)

Heat sources should be turned off at night, unless your home gets significantly cooler than 70°F/21°C at night, in which case it's a good idea to provide supplementary ambient heat like a ceramic heat emitter or deep heat projector and a thermostat.

Generally speaking, 90w PAR38 halogen flood bulbs should be plenty to achieve your target basking surface temperature. The black plastic hide box mentioned in the shopping list will act as your warm hide, and should be placed directly under the heat lamps. If you notice that either the basking area or warm hide is getting too hot, dial it down with a plug-in lamp dimmer. If your basking surface is too cool, you will need higher wattage bulbs.

The heat lamps should be able to warm the hide box to the target temperature, but this can vary. If your warm hide is not getting warm enough, add a thermostat-regulated heat mat under the hide box, covered with 1" of substrate to prevent direct contact. Place the thermostat probe inside the warm hide to regulate temperature.

To measure the basking surface temperature, use an infrared thermometer (a.k.a. temperature gun). To measure the temperature of the warm hide, use a digital probe thermometer. The Etekcity 774 is a good infrared thermometer, and most reptile-brand digital probe thermometers function well.

Humidity

Dumeril's boas need an **average humidity between 40-60%**, as measured by a digital probe hygrometer with the probe placed in the middle of the enclosure. Humidity levels that are consistently higher or lower than this range can make your pet unwell, although it's good to increase humidity for shedding.

To raise humidity in your snake's enclosure, you can use a pressure sprayer to mist the habitat in the late evening. If more is needed, place moistened sphagnum moss inside the cool hide. Check and change this moss regularly to prevent mold growth. Placing a layer of leaf litter on top of the substrate can also help maintain humidity.

Substrate

Dumeril's boas are healthiest and happiest when they are housed on a substrate (a.k.a. "bedding") that imitates the conditions of their natural habitat and facilitates moderate to high humidity. 2-4" of sandy soil is generally best for meeting this need, with a generous top layer of leaf litter — Dumeril's boas LOVE leaf litter!

Reptichip coconut husk chips and the Bio Dude Terra Sahara kit can be used for Dumeril's boas, but natural red sand like Zoo Med ReptiSand or Exo Terra Desert Sand can also be used effectively. Alternatively, you can use a DIY mix of 60% organic, additive-free topsoil + 40% play sand.

Feces and urates should be removed daily, and contaminated substrate should be scooped out and replaced. Substrate should be completely replaced once every 3-4 months.

Décor

Decorations play an important role in your boa's enclosure as environmental enrichment. Enrichment items encourage exercise, stimulate your snake's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. And, of course, they make the enclosure look nice!

Décor ideas: additional hideouts/caves, cork logs, sturdy branches, sturdy live or artificial plants

Food

Dumeril's boas are carnivores, which means that they need a diet of whole animal prey in order to get the nutrition that their bodies need. How often they need to eat can be calculated by weight:

- **Hatchlings and juveniles (no longer than 3')**: Every 7-10 days
- **Subadults (longer than 3')**: Every 14-21 days
- **Adults (no longer growing)**: Every 21-28 days

A good rule of thumb is to provide a prey item(s) which totals around 10% of your snake's weight, assuming that it is not obese. Individual prey items should be no larger than 1.5x the snake's width at its widest point. If you notice that your snake seems to be getting fat on this system, try offering smaller prey or feeding less often.

Although rats and mice are the most common feeders, snakes need to eat more than just rats and mice to truly thrive. The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for your pet is VARIETY. Provide as varied of a diet as you possibly can, and you will be rewarded with a healthier, less picky snake!

Prey item ideas: mice, African soft-furred rats, domestic rats, quail, chicks

It's best to offer frozen-thawed prey rather than live to your pet snake. This is safer for the snake and generally considered to be more humane as well. Prey should be thawed in a plastic bag in warm water to around 100°F/38°C before offering. Use soft-tipped feeding tweezers to reduce the risk of getting accidentally bitten when the snake strikes.

Supplements

Snakes can survive without vitamin or mineral supplements, but using them occasionally is a good way to help prevent nutritional deficiencies. Every once in a while, lightly dust the prey item with a 50/50 mix of calcium and multivitamin before thawing.

Arcadia Earthpro-A and Repashy CalciumPlus LoD are both good supplements to use.

Water

Dumeril's boas tend to drink a LOT of water. Your boa should have free access to a large bowl of fresh, clean water daily that gets disinfected at least twice a month. The bowl should also be large enough for the boa to curl up inside if it's in the mood for a soak.

For more information about Dumeril's boa care, read the full-length [Dumeril's Boa Care Manual](#) at [ReptiFiles.com](#).