



Colombian Rainbow Boas

Epicrates maurus

INTERMEDIATE · 4–5 FT ADULT · 20–25 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · TERRESTRIAL

The rainbow boa that forgives you. Colombian rainbows carry the same oil-slick iridescence as their famous Brazilian cousins, but they run drier and steadier, and that difference is the whole reason to start here. They are still an intermediate snake, with a keen feeding response and real humidity to hold. Get the air right and you have a glossy, level-headed boa for twenty to twenty-five years.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Intermediate
Ambient temp	78–85 °F day, 72–76 °F night
Basking spot	85–90 °F
Humidity	60–80 %
UVB	Low UVB beneficial
Diet	Mice and rats
Feeding	Every 7–10 days
Adult size	4–5 feet
Lifespan	20–25 years



Captive-bred Colombian rainbow boas fill breeder tables at NARBC shows. The iridescent sheen that names them is a species-wide trait.
Photo: Faunaram / Wikimedia Commons · CC BY 4.0

01

Temperament & Handling

Generally docile is the honest verdict, and Colombians earn it more than their Brazilian cousins do. They are alert rather than affectionate. A settled adult tolerates handling calmly, and tolerate is the honest word for it. Where people get bitten is at the enclosure door, not in hand: this is a keen feeder that reads an opening lid as dinner. Use a hook or a gentle tap to switch the animal out of feeding mode, then lift with two hands under the body.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Length of floor beats height for this snake. These are terrestrial boas that cruise the floor at night, so a long footprint beats a tall one at every stage. Racks are conditional: holding humidity in a tub without letting the air go stagnant is harder than in a front-opening enclosure. House one boa per enclosure. This is a keen feeder with a fast strike, cage mates get bitten at feeding time, and sharing a tub spreads mites and respiratory infection. Give two hides, one warm and one cool.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	20×12×12	24×18×12	More forgiving on humidity than Brazilians; 65–80 % is enough.
Juvenile	24×18×18	36×18×18	Generally more docile than Brazilian rainbows.
Subadult	36×18×18	48×24×18	Color runs less vivid than a Brazilian; the sheen is still there.
Adult	48×24×18	60×24×24	Easier humidity management than a Brazilian; the beginner-friendly rainbow.

Minimum and preferred footprints in inches, from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Horizontal floor space beats height at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Run a thermal gradient: 78–85 °F ambient with a warm surface of 85–90 °F, and let the room drop to 72–76 °F at night. Thermostat every heat source, no exceptions, and never a heat rock. Rainbow boas are nocturnal, so they do not need bright light to thrive, but a low level of UVB is a genuine benefit. Put the tube on a simple day and night cycle, and mount it so the snake can always move out of the beam.

04

Humidity & Water

Target 60–80 %. Colombians hold up at the low end of that range better than Brazilian rainbows do, and that margin is what forgives a slow week. Get there with a deep, damp substrate and a bowl big enough to soak in, not with constant misting. **Humidity without airflow is how rainbow boas get scale rot and respiratory infection: keep the bedding damp, the air moving, and the snake's belly dry.** Buy a digital hygrometer and read it at snake level.

05

Substrate & Enrichment

Cypress mulch, coconut husk, or a bioactive soil blend all hold moisture without souring, and any of them beats aspen here. Go deep enough that the bottom layer stays damp while the surface dries. Skip loose sand entirely, and skip cedar, whose aromatic oils are toxic to snakes. Pine is best left alone too. Enrichment for a nocturnal terrestrial boa is texture: cork flats, a sturdy branch to lean on, and leaf litter to push through.

06

Feeding

Mice and rats, frozen and thawed, every 7–10 days. Hatchlings take pinky or fuzzy mice; adults move up to appropriately sized rats, and no prey item should be wider than the thickest part of the snake. Rainbow boas find prey by heat, so warm it properly and offer it on long tongs, well away from your fingers. Obesity is the real risk with a feeder this willing. Hold the schedule, weigh the snake monthly, and don't add a meal because it begged.

07

Health Red Flags

Two failures bracket the humidity range. Too dry gives you patchy shed, retained eye caps, and a dull, papery look. Too wet and dirty gives scale rot: brown or blistered belly scales, sometimes weeping. Damp, still air brings respiratory infection, so watch for open-mouth breathing, wheezing, or bubbles at the nostrils. Scale rot or any breathing sign is a reptile vet visit, not a wait-and-see. Weigh monthly; the scale spots trouble before your eyes will.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual - when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.