



Dumeril's Boas

Acrantophis dumerili

INTERMEDIATE · 5–7 FT ADULT · 20–30 YR LIFESPAN · TERRESTRIAL · MADAGASCAR · CITES II

Madagascar's big terrestrial boa, and one of the calmest large snakes in the hobby. Dumeril's are heavy-bodied ground dwellers dressed in cryptic browns that vanish into leaf litter. They stay docile, they grow slowly, and they live a long time. The honest headline is space and patience: this is a floor-dwelling animal that needs real square footage, and twenty to thirty years is the commitment you make at the table.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Intermediate
Ambient temp	78–84 °F day, 72–76 °F night
Basking spot	88–90 °F
Humidity	50–70%
UVB	Low output, beneficial
Diet	Rats, frozen/thawed
Feeding cadence	Every 10–14 days
Adult size	5–7 feet
Lifespan	20–30 years



Captive-bred Dumeril's boas turn up at NARBC breeder tables wearing some version of the cryptic leaf-litter pattern.

Photo: avocat / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Temperament & Handling

Dumeril's sit at the mellow end of the boa family, and the reputation is earned. They are slow, deliberate, ground-loving snakes that would rather hold still than test you. Calm is not the same as enjoying handling. Support the whole body, keep sessions short, and let a new animal settle in for a week or two before you reach in. A boa this heavy and this food-motivated deserves a hook tap first, so the snake knows hands from dinner.

02

Floor Space Comes First

Everything about this snake points at the floor. Orientation is horizontal at every stage, so trade height for length and width. Give two snug hides, one warm and one cool, plus a water bowl big enough to soak in. Adults need 60×24×18 at minimum and do better at 72×30×24; racks stop being appropriate once they get there. Keep them one to a box. Two food-motivated boas reaching for the same rat is how a cagemate gets constricted, and a shared cage masks who ate, shed or lost weight.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Neonate	20×12×12	24×18×12	Born live and calm; horizontal floor space matters from day one.
Juvenile	24×18×18	36×18×18	Slow growers next to common boas; don't rush the upgrades.
Subadult	48×24×18	60×24×18	More ground-oriented than common boas; width beats height.
Adult	60×24×18	72×30×24	Racks are done at this size. CITES II listed, so captive-bred only.

Minimum and preferred enclosure dimensions in inches, from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance.

03

Heat & Light

Run a gradient. Ambient sits at 78–84 °F with a basking surface of 88–90 °F, and nights are allowed to fall to 72–76 °F; that dip is normal for a Madagascan forest floor, not a failure. **Every heat source runs through a thermostat, and heat rocks never belong in a boa enclosure.** Low UVB is not mandatory for this species, but it is beneficial. A low-output tube over part of the cage costs little and does real good.

04

Humidity & Water

Hold humidity at 50–70% and measure it, because guessing is how boas end up with bad sheds or worse. A large water bowl on the cool side does most of the work; a heavier substrate and a partial lid cover handle the rest. Aim for damp with airflow, never wet and stagnant. Stuck shed on the tail tip is the first honest signal you're running dry. A humid hide with damp sphagnum solves most of those cases without soaking the whole cage.

05

Substrate and Furniture

Cypress mulch, coconut husk, or a soil and leaf-litter mix all hold the target humidity without souring. Give enough depth that the snake can push into it and feel pressure on its sides. Skip loose sand outright. A floor feeder swallows bedding with every rat, and young animals pay for it first. Furnish at floor level: cork flats, a hide at each end, and leaf litter or plants to break up sightlines. A low, solid branch gets used more than you would expect from a ground snake.

06

Feeding

Captive Dumeril's live on rats, and frozen/thawed is the standard: safer for the snake, simpler for you. An adult takes one appropriately sized rat every 10–14 days, and that interval is not a suggestion. This species grows slowly even next to common boas, so a power-fed animal gets fat long before it gets big. Judge by body shape rather than appetite. A well-conditioned boa is a rounded triangle in cross-section; a ridged backbone or a rolling belly means it's time to adjust.

07

Health Red Flags

Watch the breathing first. Open-mouth breathing, wheezing or clicking, and bubbles at the nostrils mean respiratory infection, usually from a cage run too cool or too wet. Regurgitation is never routine in a boa: one episode means stop feeding and check temperatures. Mites show as black specks in the water bowl. Any of those, or a snake losing weight while still eating, is a reptile-vet visit. Quarantine every new arrival, no exceptions.

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.