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Bitis gabonica care sheet

Image Credit : Graeme LotterA Gaboon Viper is a big-bodied viper species. Bitis is not the largest member and has the longest fangs up to 0.05 metres long. The swatch consists of a series of pale, sub-rectangle spots running down the middle of the back, interspaced with dark, yellow-edged hourglass markings. The wings are a series of roe deer or brown diamond-shaped, bright vertical central bars. The head is white or cream, with a fine dark centerline, black spots in the back corners, and a dark blue-black triangle behind and below each eye. Scientific name : Bitis gabonicaDistribution : Central, Eastern and South AfricaAn average size : 1.5 m (5 ft)Lifetime : 20 years or moreNeedy : AdvancedHousingHouse Bitis gabonica can be as simple or eloquent as the keeper desires. We outline preferences based on 30+ years of keeping/breeding a lot of failures thrown into good measure. We hope that our hard-won success with this species will negate much of the trial and error that was the norm in the 1970s-1990s, as we realized in the care of this wonderful species. For newborns though 0.9 meters (3 feet), we routinely use standard rack systems, ranging from 0.3 x 0.6 x 0.15 meters (1 x 2 x 0.5 feet) through 0.45 x 1 x 0.2 meters (1.5 x 3.2 x 0.6 feet) to be. Once the Gaboon reaches 0.9 meters (3 feet) in our facility, it is cared for for breeding purposes. At this point, they're transferred to breeding cages to be adult and adapted to their surroundings well in advance – often 2 years before breeding experiments begin. While our settings may seem extravagant, especially for Americans, this is what works for us year after year, with all three species of bitis gabonica, Bitis rhinoceros and Bitis nascoornis. Breeder cages are set up in one of two ways, depending on location and numbers in current populations. Setting #1: Our preferred setting is a cage of 3 x 1.5 x 0.9 meters (10 x 5 x 3 feet). It is designed to be waterproof, the floor drains, and a sloping floor to facilitate drainage. The substrate is dealt with below. This cage has a number of logs and stumps set up to act as visual obstacles and is heavily planted in common pothos vines as they grow rapidly, cheap, tolerate abuse of heavy-bodied snakes, and promotes the connection to the safety of these rainforest-dwelling species that rely on camouflage. We routinely house 2-3 adults, up to 1.7 meters (5.5 feet) + long, throughout the year, such a closed, non-hostile between males (except during a non-harmful ritual fight during the breeding season) once the feeling out process is completed at first introduction. Visual barriers are the key. Set-up #2: We are fortunate to be in possession of what we believe to be a group of hypo-melanist or pastel morph Bitis rhinos (not yet proven). For controlled selective breeding, 2.4 x 1.2 x 0.9 meters (8 x 4 x 3 feet). They are similarly waterproof (concrete and stump construction), numerous logs and stumps, and heavy Pothos installations. We house 1.1 in these casings, all year round. We feel that male-male combat is necessary for repeated, successful breeding, so we introduce smaller, subordinate males, throughout the breeding season, always personally checked to avoid injuries, so the designated men we want to breed are guaranteed to win the challenge. Like many species, we feel that females will not be trusted to ovulate when exposed to such combat experiments. For us, breeding season, central Florida, USA, clusters between September/January, but we also found that seasons can be manipulated to induce breeding at almost any time of the year. Hide SpotI've never had bitis gabonica use the hide box and they just don't give one. Young snakes will wiggle down the substrate just to the spine spine and head protruding instead. Adults are always equipped with logs and plants to tuck into contact with the safety and feeling of camouflage. These snakes seem to be acutely aware of their remarkable ability to camouflage, given the possibility to blend in with plants, logs, leaves, etc. SubstrateSubstrate for Bitis gabonica can be woodland-floor mixture peat, soil, coir, sand, leaves, etc For young animals, we simply use shredded summer, and have never had any issues with intestinal impactions, though we monitor all feeding and go so far to use tweezers to gently remove any fiber from chips that the snake, or wet rodent, may move toward the mouth before swallowing occurs. These snakes are extremely tolerant of such procedures until one is careful, slow, and deliberate. In the case of larger breeding cages, our substrate is as follows, from the base to the surface: The base layer of chicken egg-sized rocks, pea ice, 0.02 meters (0.06 ft) coarse sand, 0.1-0.15 meters (0.3-0.5 feet) organic potting soil/sand at a 50/50 ratio, topped with a loose luscious plant-type mix of 50/50 soil/rough Perlite and large pieces of hardwood mulch to make the snake experience high humidity while making out of direct contact with a constantly wet substrate. On this Pothos is free to root and expand. We're plant people, too, so it's a common mix for us. The goal is a free-drain mixture that contains enough water to maintain the parallels of rainforests while avoiding swampy surface conditions that can lead to breathing problems. There is considerable room to play this mixture based on climate and local conditions. Bottom row: Wet, but not wet. Free flowing fresh air without stagnation. Rainforests can be surprisingly cool with evaporation scenarios not immediately evident to our air-conditioned minds. Lighting – Heating Young snakes in a rack system are exposed to ambient room temperature of 25.5 -28 °C (78 -82 °F) during the day with a drop °C (72-75 °F) at night. Light Light low and quite dark, as in the subhistory of the rainforest. Bitis gabonica is not tolerant of excessive heat, does well constantly in hot environments and does not feed and/or regurgitate temperature extremes. Breeding cages on the other side shall be maintained by a time-controlled night red light at a temperature of 27 to 32 °C (88 to 90 °F) from March to August, which shall maintain a temperature of 29 to 31 °C for potentially gravid females if they so choose. Cages are relatively dark and no additional light is provided. While we know of other successful breeders with different experiences, we never have any snake other than gravid women using a basking light and using it as a general indicator of successful breeding. We maintain 12/12 light/dark cycles throughout the year. WaterWater, where Bitis gabonica becomes problematic for many keepers, even those with significant experience and success with other species. Have you noticed that hundreds, if not thousands, of gaboons are imported every year, yet very, very few are generally available as CBB outside Africa? Where are they all going? The answer is not what we usually want to acknowledge. Kidney failure deaths are often, and erroneously, attributed to fatal parasitic infections. Imports come in severely dehydrated, even if they look flawless. In nature, Bitis gabonica drinks mainly from rolls from heavy rainfall on a daily basis. These are not snakes accustomed to drinking from standing water, as it is simply not necessary in the home environment. These snakes all come in some form of kidney failure - each and every one. Read it as many times as you need to. It's the same with Rhinoceros Vipers, to an even greater extent. Imported / newborns – soak, soak, soak daily in clean water. This cannot be overstated. They can also spray commercial greenhouse sprayers to imitate rainfall, and drink and drink for long periods of time. They were also gently hooked over into a shallow water pot, his head, and then gently tipped into the water, where they drink large amounts of water. After a series of exposures, you can finally recognize standing water as Gaboon and seek it out. If in doubt, soak, spray or tip into the water. Often cited literature suggests an aquarium air-stone roll the water surface of a water vessel to attract snake and atomize water particles as an alternative. While we don't discount this as it works very well for many faviopera species, we've never had success with this approach with the Gaboon Vipers. All this is said, all cages are maintained in large, shallow water dishes at all times. Large breeding cages contain a 24 x 36 x 8 concrete mixing tub with shallow sloping sides, filled with fresh water at all times. Snakes regularly soak in these tubs and defecate them. Here, large breeding cages also equipped with simple DIY automated rain systems. A cheap in-line timer, set for rain in the morning, noon, and afternoon comes and completely falls in the closed between 1-20 minutes an episode, depending on the season we're trying to replicate. Higher, more frequent rainy periods correspond to the wet, breeding season and are key to bringing about successful breeding. For smaller machines, a simple greenhouse sprayer can be easily modified to spray rain on the casing for a sufficient period of time. Manual spraying should not be discounted, but takes more dedication and attention to daily routines to achieve effectively. It also serves to stimulate gastric motility and bowel movements. Snakes come to life while raining and actively crawl and explore the entire cage. HumidityMidlene through newborns 0.6-0.9 meters (2-3 feet) snakes with a general humidity of 75-85%. Despite the seemingly logical extrapolation that rainforest snakes would need nearly 100% humidity, our years of experience and failures support drier environments for young animals. The animals are maintained in the same rain cycle as above. Breeder cage, whatever the expansion, have a top that consists of 1/2 net over the full length/width of the cage to let for full air flow. It should be mentioned that in the snake room a main fan is used, which extracts / replaces the total volume of the room with fresh air every 10 minutes. Although we realize that this is not in the hands of all keepers, we feel that we need to mention all the relevant facts as we have experienced them. FeedingBitis gabonica is usually not a heavy feeding agent. Overeating is usually more of a problem than malnutrition. It's a simple thing to push an 8 newborn nearly 0.9 meters (3 feet) within a year, but such a snake typically dies suddenly in years 3-5 as an obese person with a shorter lifespan. After decades of trial and error, we feed medium-sized foods and do not feed again until the previous meal is emptied. Our animals are lean, not fat, active and healthy. Females are fed a little stronger before breeding, and after successful breeding for the first 2-4 months. Males should be kept thin. While seemingly lean by current standards, males will not successfully breed and will often show no interest in breeding if they are too heavy. If you feel you're doing everything right, but still don't see breeding activity, obesity is usually an issue. Fat is not the same as happiness in the case of gaboons! Small foods, especially recent imports, are the best option. If regurgitation is a problem, first assess the temperature. If it is too cold or hot, adjust it as needed. If the temperature is correct, too much prey element is usually the issue. Reduce the size of the prey. Just because Gaboon seems to be big enough to handle a great meal doesn't mean it should be! Gabonica may seem calm, easy to handle/manipulate animals. It's this certainly true 98% of the time – especially during the day vs. nights. That great liberties can be taken by most animals is evident in the lack of death, since frequent Facebook posts about individuals doing stupid things in Gaboons. In 2% of cases, it's fatal, if not fatal. These snakes are amazingly fast, agile, and they hit accurately in any direction, even from behind. Their venom is a terrible combination of hemotoxins and cytotoxins, which are transformed into crippling, if not fatal bites, if it occurs. Polivalens Antivenin in South Africa is quite effective and should maintain at least 10-20 vials for all responsible keepers outside the normal range. Young animals are easy to handle with standard methods. Large, heavy-bodied adults best handle wide hooks that spread in weight and large parts of a heavy animal with the largest surface area possible. CleaningAs for all snake species, daily spot cleaning should be the norm, with the entire cage broken down into cleaning every couple of weeks/months, depending on set-ups. Heavy plantings and microorganisms like springtails to create a bioactive substrate that minimizes complete cleaning. Anoles, skinks, etc., can be created by the fly controlling large rainforest tow with excellent success. Shedding With appropriate humidity, shedding rarely occurs with Bitis gabonica problems. To be honest, we don't remember a single episode of shedding difficulty, except for very rough-treated snakes of the 1980s – thankfully a thing of the past. Possible health problemsRespiration infections are occasionally an issue with high humidity and poor airflow, although this is rare. Protozoa infections/proliferation are more common, as well as roundworm and lungworm infections/proliferation. While we will never support against routine fecal exams and wormings, we, for one, do not routinely worm imported Bitis gabonica unless symptoms or problems are present. There are several reasons for this. As mentioned above, these snakes usually come in dehydrated and many wormers strongly tax the kidneys and/or liver. If the animal is already at metabolic disadvantage, adding worm empylers can tip the snake to the edge and kill it. We prefer to set the snakes up as outlined above and observe. After a period of time at the facility, with the right temperature, and solid feeding, a 6-month quarantine period away from the main collection, you'll then evaluate the need for the worm. Although not a popular opinion, we find that prophylactic wormosis is necessary only in 25% of cases. If necessary, standard doses of Panacur and Flaygl are applied at a standard dosages and standards readily available in Google search. Bite Protocol is highly recommended for all venomous species to hold or be interested to keep that bite protocol. Each species has a separate bite protocol that contains general information about the species, their venom, and if he's bitten. It contains detailed information on first aid (what to do and what not to do), specific treatment recommendations for medical staff to ensure adequate care, including information on antitoxin or antitoxin for treatment. Finally, this includes a list of people who specialize in snakebite and contact information, so you can be consulted to assist with care if necessary, and a list of all the links used to create the protocol. Recommended BookSourceThe information on this care page reflects the views and methods of this breeder, based on their expertise and long experience. Experience.