

Breeding Emerald Tree Boas

Tips for breeding emerald tree boas.

By Jerry G. Walls

I am looking to breed emerald tree boas (*Corallus caninus*), and I need any information on how to do it correctly. What are the correct temperature and humidity levels? Should I put the male into the female's cage or vice versa?

-Joe Siedlecki, Georgia

Emerald tree boas are one of the most desirable and distinctive of the boas, and they also are surprisingly easy to breed. Many hobbyists have had good success producing litters on a regular basis from just one or two pairs, and there is no reason you shouldn't be successful as well.

First, make sure that your specimens are healthy, feeding and fully adult. Imported emeralds tend to have intestinal worms and should be taken to a veterinarian for treatment of both roundworms and flukes. Captive-bred snakes are less likely to carry worms, but have a vet at least check a stool sample. Some roundworms are easily transmitted from the mother to young even under the best conditions, and roundworms could lead to the death of young. Emerald tree boas can be bred when they're about 2 years old, but bigger, healthier litters are produced by larger, older females. It is usually best to wait, therefore, until females are more than 4 feet long and 3 years old.

Emerald tree boas (*Corallus caninus*) are distinctive and attractive boas that are not difficult to breed.

These snakes are arboreal and need warm, humid terraria. Generally, emeralds are maintained at 78 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, with small temperature drops (to no lower than 72 degrees) during the night, when they are most active. A relative humidity of 75 to 85 percent is normal and usually attained by regular misting and a substrate that retains moisture.

Breeders generally aim for a late autumn to early spring breeding season. Because males may fight (i.e., one dominant male attempting to constrict and mount subordinate males), most keepers like to keep their snakes in separate terraria all year, putting the male in with the female for mating. A month before putting the snakes together, drop the temperature by 4 to 6 degrees, but not below 72 degrees. The relative humidity should be increased to 90 percent during this period. This cooling seems to spur more matings (it also is widely believed that high temperatures lead to temporary infertility in males).

Males tend to be smaller and more slender; they also have distinctly larger spurs on either side of the vent, and a hemipenal bulge usually is obvious. A male actively courts the female when introduced, and copulation should take place within a few hours (certainly within a couple days). Keep the male with the female for a month to assure that several matings occur and thus more young are produced.

A gravid female should be housed separately for the (roughly) 240 to 260 days of her pregnancy. Provide a red heat lamp over a favorite perch to allow her to bask whenever she wants. Do not stress gravid females. They often eat for the first few months of pregnancy and then stop until after giving birth. A gravid female sheds her skin a few days before giving birth.

Litters of five to 12 bright reddish-brown young about 14 inches long are produced, often with several "slugs" (unfertilized eggs and incompletely developed embryos), as well as a great amount of feces. Birth can be truly messy with these boas! Remove the babies to separate cages shortly after they're born, and closely monitor their development and feeding.

Most young emerald tree boas take small pre-killed mice as soon as they have their first shed in one to two weeks, but some are slow to feed and may require force-feeding or lizards. Some never feed and die within a month or two. With luck, a healthy young emerald could live 12 to 15 years.