

Working with Giants

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A Retirement Home for Snakes
www.snakehaus.com

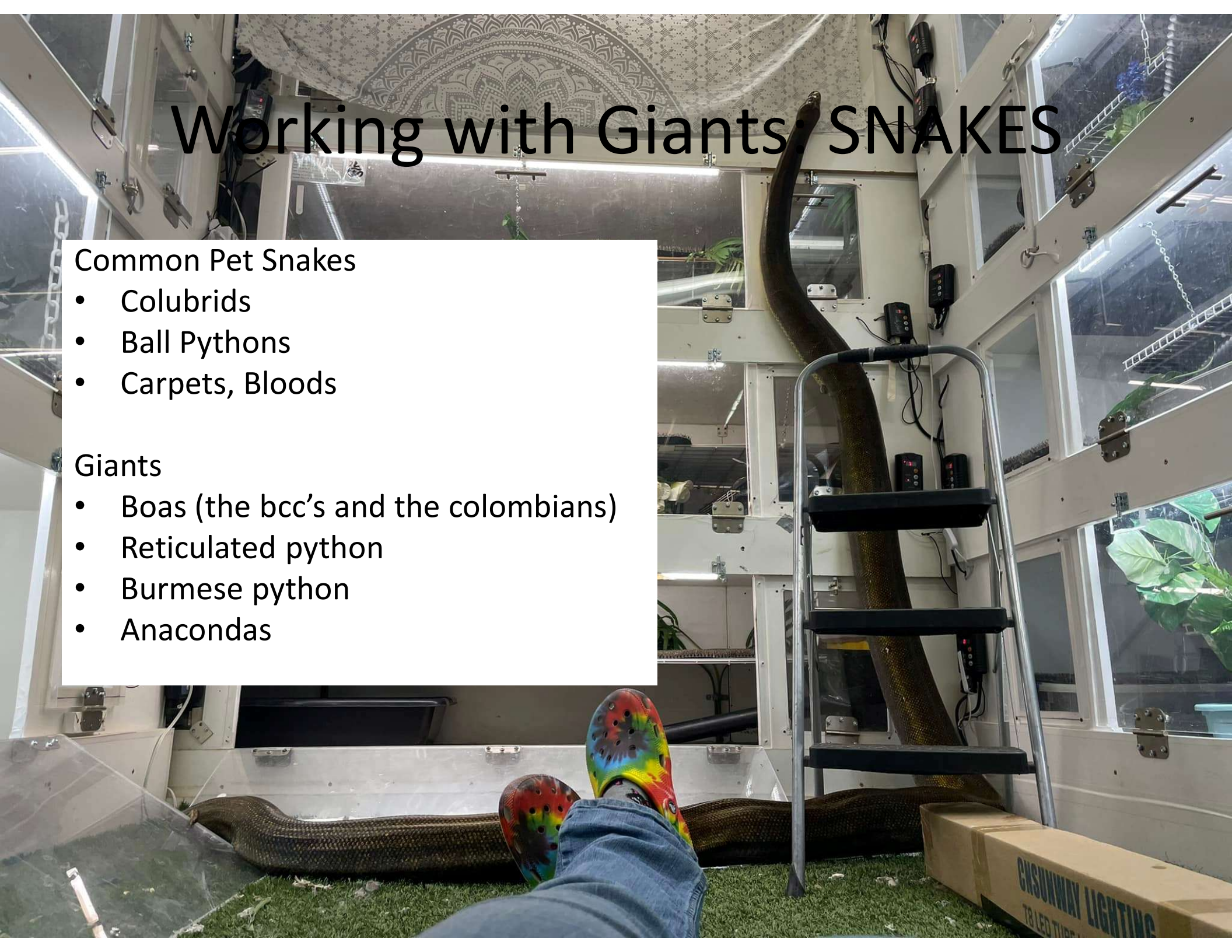
Working with Giants: SNAKES

Common Pet Snakes

- Colubrids
- Ball Pythons
- Carpets, Bloods

Giants

- Boas (the bcc's and the colombians)
- Reticulated python
- Burmese python
- Anacondas



Who are we?

Sara Mayes DVM: Cascade Animal Clinic, Monroe

Nicky Finch DVM: WSU Veterinary teaching hospital

Kami Wasilchen LVT: Cascade Animal Clinic, Monroe

Mirko Mayes: Facility Coordinator Blue Pearl Kirkland



501(c)(3) non-profit & 509(a)(2) public charity

Snakes that are difficult to place or rehome

What do we do?



VIEWER DISCRETION ADVISED





Snake Haus West: Giant
Snake Haus East: Little



Working with Giants: SNAKES

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Who's who?

Boas: the Americas

- Boas
- Anacondas

Pythons: Africa, Asia, Aus

- Retics & Burms
- Ball Pythons
- Carpets



Colubrids: every continent except Antarctica

Boas – highly variable

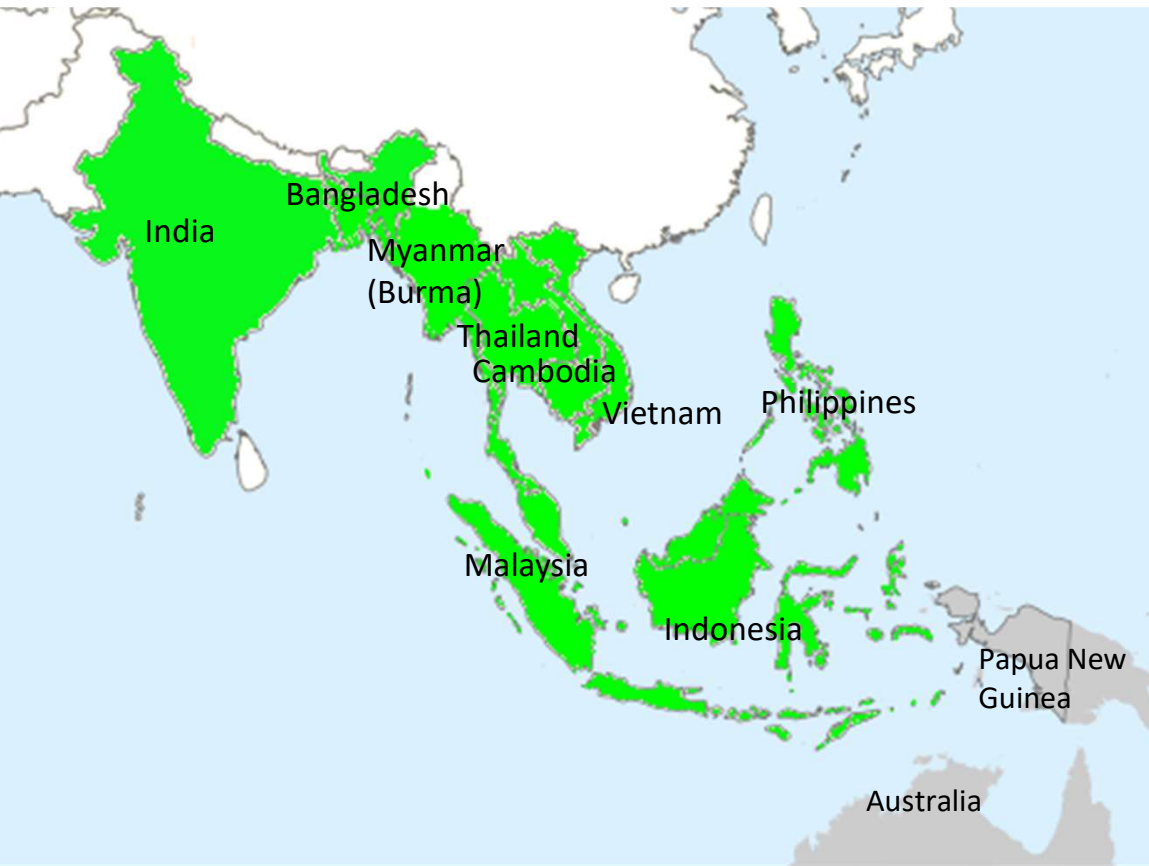
Sub Species

- **Boa C. Constrictor (BCC):** True Red Tails **GIANTS!**
- **Boa C. Imperator (BCI):** Central American, Common, or Colombian **GIANTS & DWARFS both**
- **Boa C. Longicauda and Ortonii:** Peru
- **Boa C. Melanogaster:** Ecuador*
- **Boa C. Amarali :** Bolivia
- **Boa C. Occidentalis:** Argentina
- **Boa C. Nebulosus:** Dominican Island
- **Boa C. Orophias:** St. Lucia island
- **Eunectes murinus or notaeus:** **Anaconda**



The Giant Pythons of SE Asia

Reticulated



Burmese



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_snakes

The Giants are a bit more difficult

Husbandry

- Enclosure size
- Heat
- Water
- Food
- Hides

Behavior: species differences

Training: applied behavioral pressures

Handling: size matters



Husbandry for Giants

Husbandry

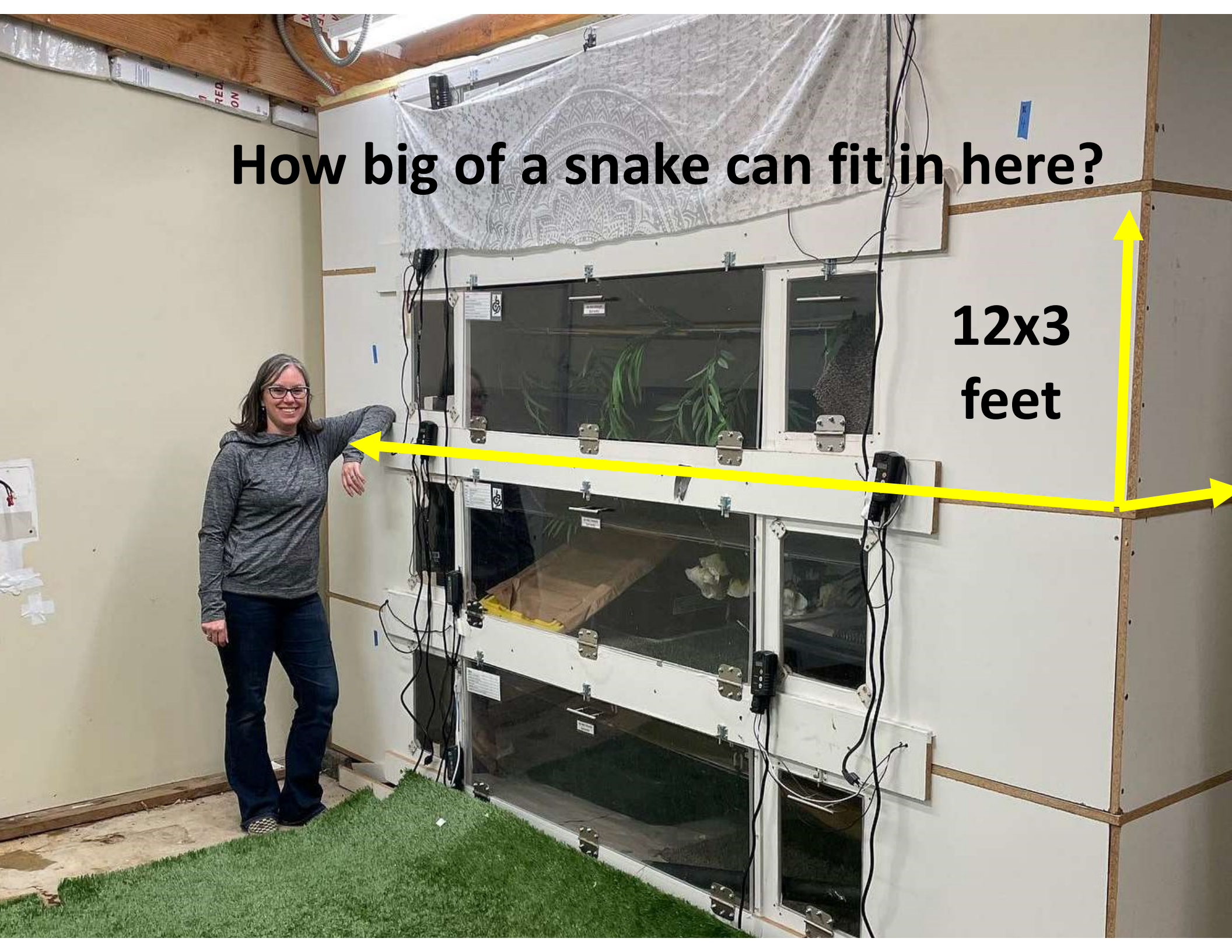
- Enclosure size
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Same principles as smaller snakes but more difficult to achieve.



How big of a snake can fit in here?

**12x3
feet**



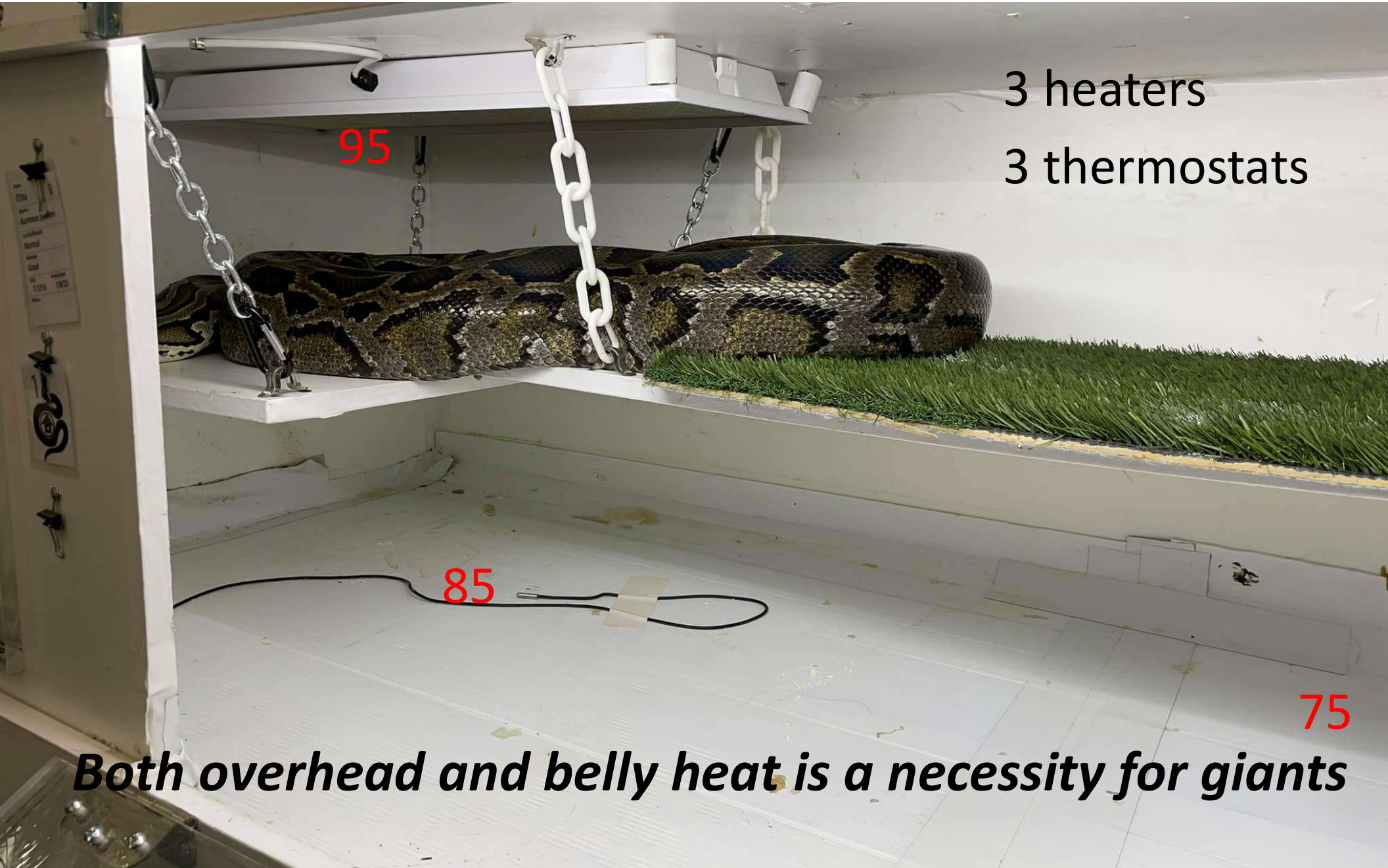
Exercise

Need a space where they can stretch and move

- Safe
- Escape proof
- Controlled
- Room to move



Heat for Giants



3 heaters

3 thermostats

95

85

75

Both overhead and belly heat is a necessity for giants

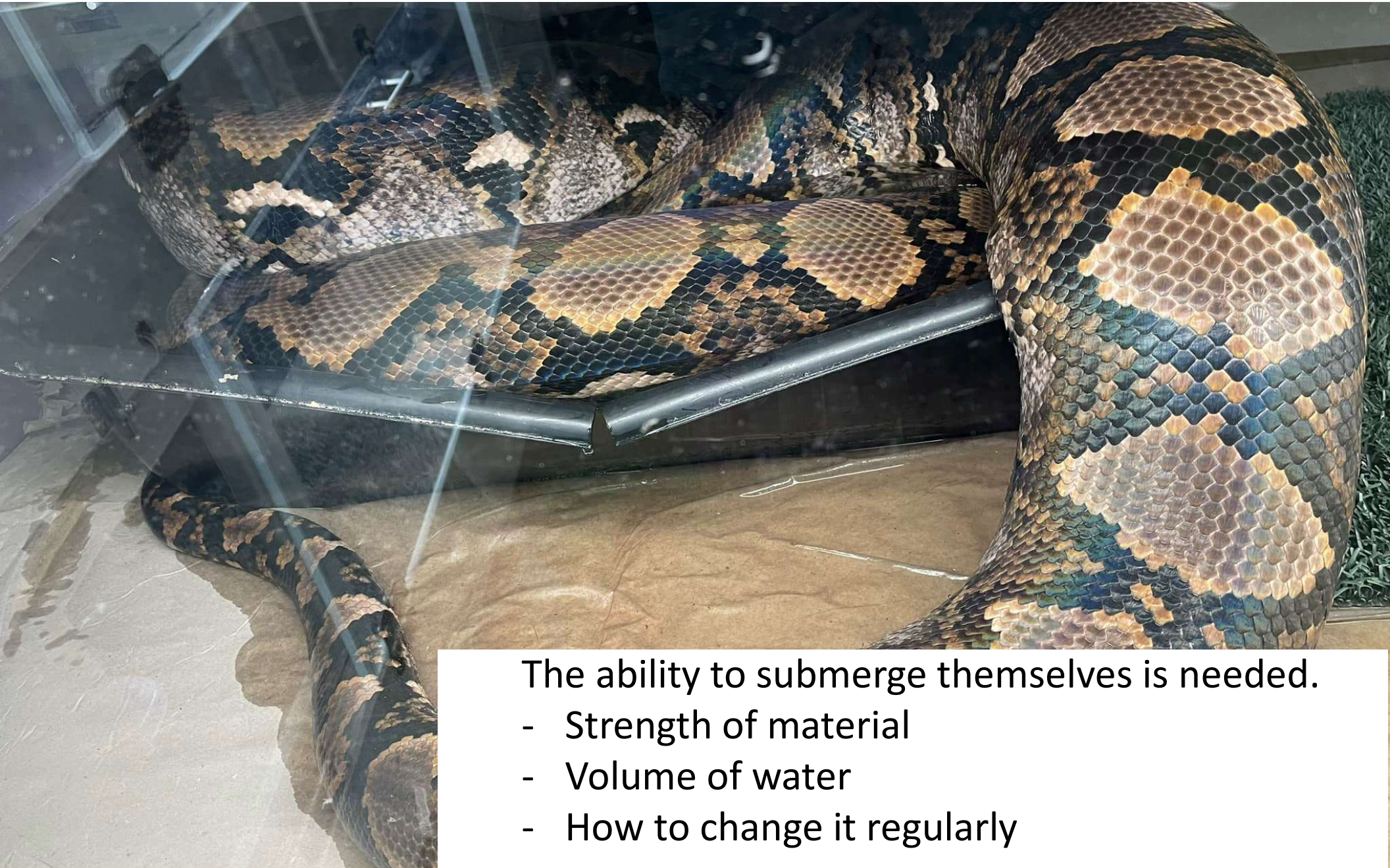
Heat for Giants



- Air flow and heat dissipation
- Protect heater from water
- Protect snake from burns

Both overhead and belly heat is a necessity for giants

Water for Giants



The ability to submerge themselves is needed.

- Strength of material
- Volume of water
- How to change it regularly

Water for Giants



The ability to submerge themselves is needed for skin health.

Water for Giants



https://youtu.be/r_65FwIKPTM

These guys NEED to swim!



Food for Giants

- 8-15lb rabbits
- q4-8 weeks
- 2 people needed
- Winter fast
- Frozen/thawed



Hides for Giants

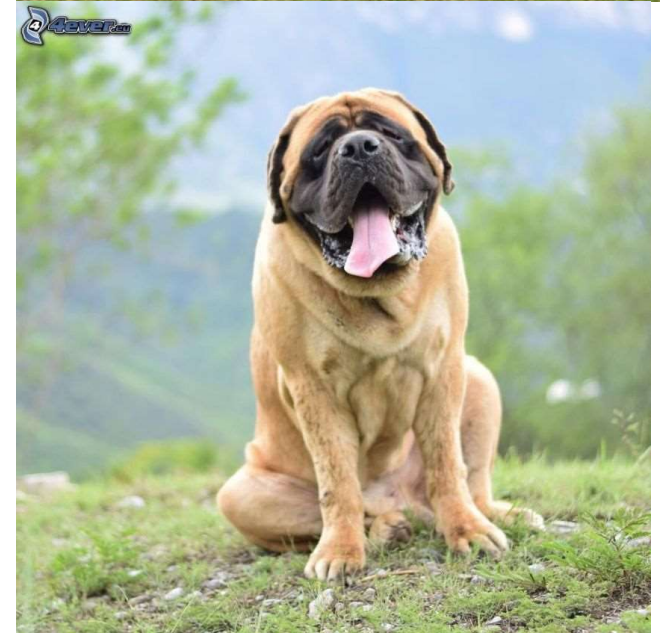
Positive thigmotaxis

Training and handling tool



Behavior

- Retics: hyper and reactive
 - somewhat diurnal
 - Energetic and more likely to move around during handling or inside enclosure
 - Excellent climbers
 - Very intelligent and interactive
 - Rapidly explore changes in their environment or may bolt away if scared
- Boas and Burms: slow and curious
 - mostly nocturnal
 - calm and slow moving
 - Excellent swimmers
 - very curious and will steadily move toward something they are interested in
 - they prefer to save their energy for feeding but can move lightning fast when food motivated



Body Language

- **Eye contact:** assume the worst and act accordingly
 - direct eye contact means I'm hungry
- **Body Posture:** very important!!
 - S shape to body
 - Front 1/3 elevated off the ground
- **Tongue flick:** tasting the air
 - Tells you they're awake and interested



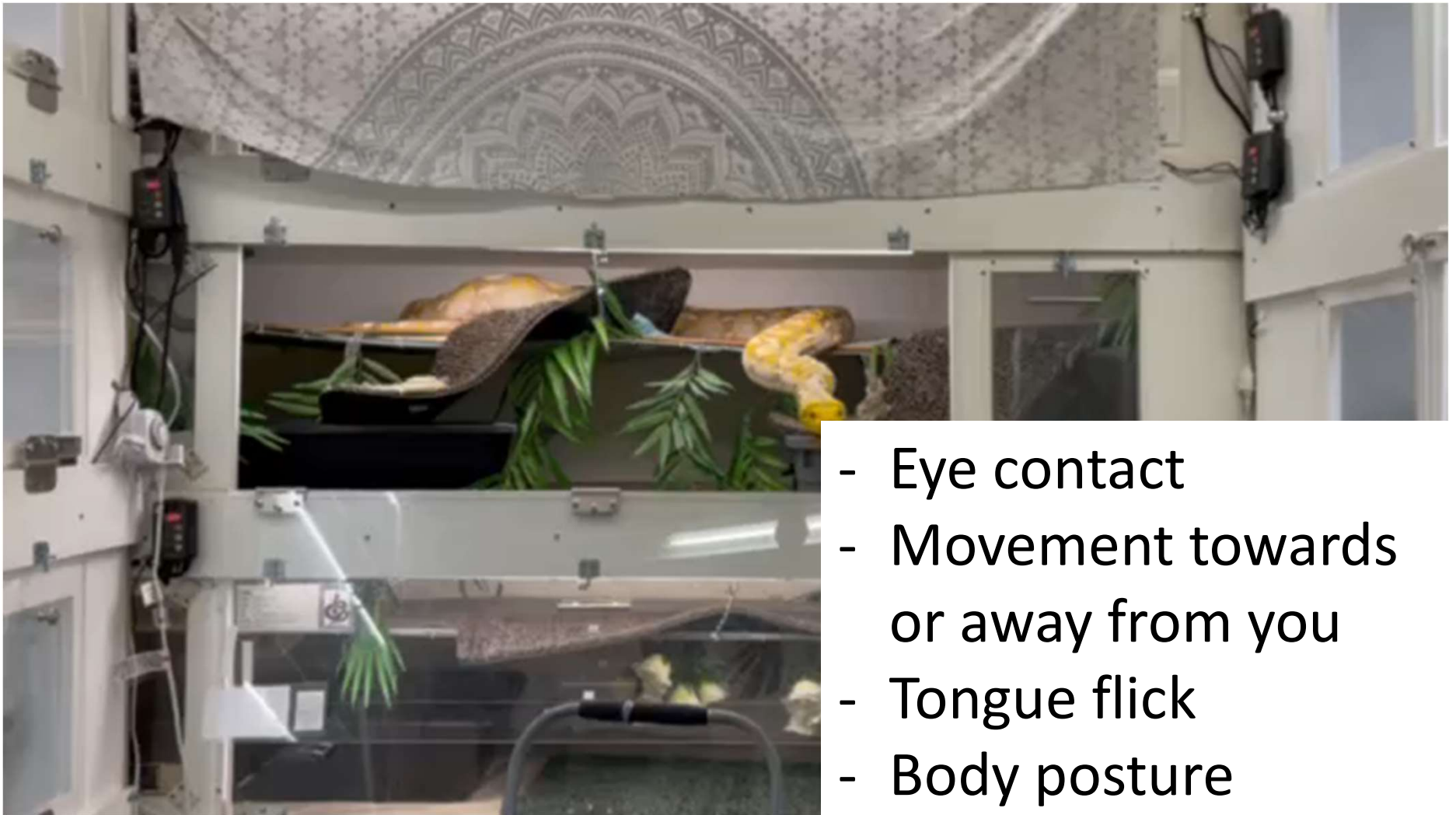
Snake Bites: no big deal. . .

- Snake Bites: no big deal!



- Types of bites: defense, *food*, *fight mode*

Body Language



- Eye contact
- Movement towards or away from you
- Tongue flick
- Body posture

Body language



- Eye contact
- Movement towards or away from you
- Tongue flick
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Training

Tools of Training

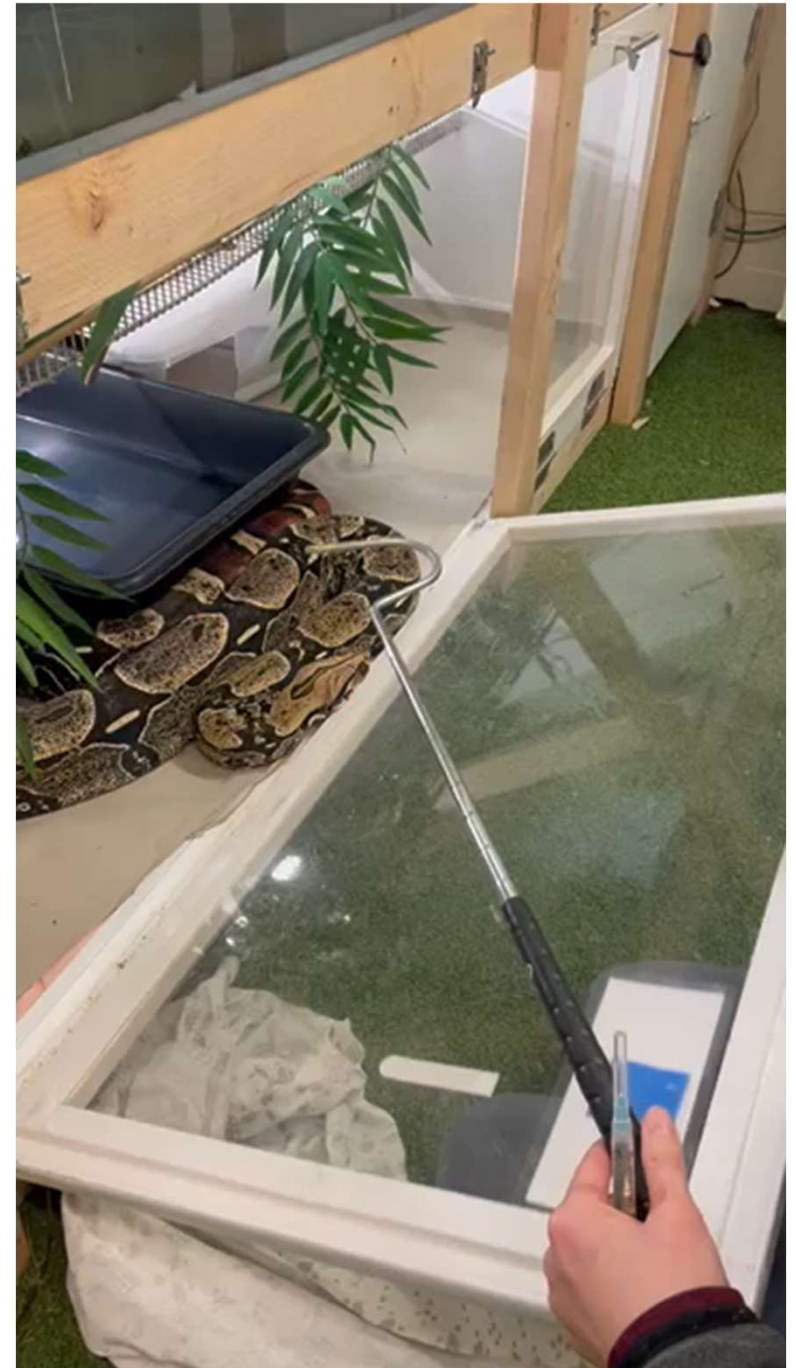
- Hook
- Hide
- Towels
- Thin gloves
- Time and Patience
- Close observation and flexibility

*Training should not start until the animal feels safe inside their enclosure

Hook

A communication tool:

- Break the food drive: smell and heat signature
- Applied behavioral pressures: elicit a desired response and reward
- Redirection = steering rather than forced movement



Hides

Positive thigmotaxis

- security blanket for the animal
- Reward for redirection w/ hook
- Elicits cooperation from the animal
- Vital for moving giants around
- Feeding bin – CAUTION – not the same thing!



Gloves



Towel



Training

Applied Behavioral Pressure: choice-based handling

- 1) Putting a gentle pressure on the animal that elicits a response
- 2) Adjust that pressure until you see the desired response or behavior
- 3) Once they comply the pressure stops
 - cessation of the pressure is the reward
- 4) Slowly change the pressures to teach new behaviors

VIDEO

Hook training with Cello: <https://youtu.be/B4emglk5crl>

Applied Behavioral Pressure: choice-based handling

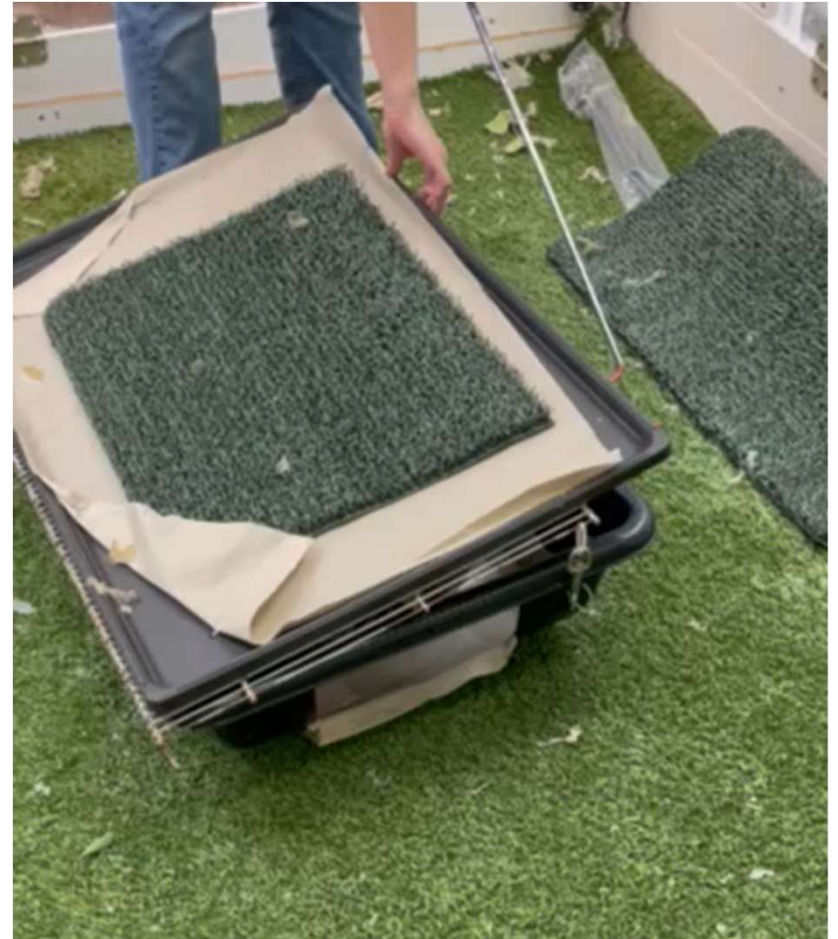


VIDEO

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Transportation tub

- Go slow, be polite, say hello
- Give them a chance to look around
- Ask them to cooperate



- Eye contact
- Movement towards or away from you
- Tongue flick
- Body posture

Safe Handling for Giants

Size Matters: One person for every 6' of snake

Respect the animal:

- Say hello first and make sure they are awake
- Give them time to look at where they are and think
- Invite them out: must give them somewhere to go
- Avoid the head and tail
- Be strong but gentle

No snake scarves: one shoulder only

Thank You

Website:

www.snakehaus.com

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/snakehaus>

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