



HERPETOLOGIA

A column for short herpetological contributions

RAISING OFFSPRING OF EPICRATES STRIATUS STRIATUS

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A lot of breeders of *Epicrates striatus striatus*, the Haiti boa, have negative experiences with raising offspring of this species. Many times, the youngsters do not eat and eventually die. Several times on the Snake day in Utrecht we met breeders selling young snakes who told us that these snakes did not feed voluntarily. In this small article we describe our own experiences with raising youngsters of this lovely and interesting species that however, is sold rarely.

About five years ago we obtained a pair of wild caught Haiti boa's. These snakes were well used to captivity and in good condition. The first owner told us he had bred with this couple and got twelve young. However, all efforts to make the baby snakes eat voluntarily failed. So he force fed them with slices of beef heart in order to sell them on the Snake Day and get rid of them.

In 1993 we also bred with this couple. This time there were only two baby snakes and about twelve unfertilized eggs. The first few months of their lives, we had to force feed the two baby snakes with mouse tails, until we read somewhere in the literature that young Haiti boa's would eat fish voluntarily. And indeed, as we put some Zebra fish (*Branchydanio rerio*) and Guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*) in their water tank, they finally star-

ted eating of their own.

As they ate these preys eagerly, we decided to raise the snakes on a diet of fish. After one year we switched to small Goldfish, which were eaten without any problem. In 1995 we started by offering one Goldfish and one young mouse. The nose of the mouse had been wounded previously. Then we rubbed the entire mouse a few times over the fish, so it smelled like fish. After the goldfish the snakes accepted the mouse.

Now, we feed the two young snakes on young mice only, which are digested without any problems. This way of feeding young *Epicrates striatus striatus* seems to be successful and our long effort was rewarded.

At this very moment we have another litter of the Haiti boa. This time the number of baby snakes is twenty one, and the first youngsters already feed voluntarily on fish.

English translation by Jan-Cor Jacobs