

Husbandry Guidelines for Binturong **(*Arctictis Binturong*)**

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The Binturong, also known as a Bearcat is part of the Viverridae family. They are found in the forests through South and Southeast Asia. (Listed as Vulnerable by IUCN).

Biology:

Binturongs are one of only two carnivores that have a prehensile tail, which is fully functional within just a couple of hours after birth. They are also capable of rotating their hind ankles almost 180 degrees which aids them in using their forward facing claws, whilst climbing down branches and trees as they are primarily arboreal. They are typically solitary, although small groups of a mother and offspring may exist at certain times of the year, they are not strictly territorial but will occupy flexible home ranges. In captivity males and females can be housed together successfully with little to no complications.

Body length ranges from 61cm to 91cm with a tail almost the same length (60cm to 70cm). The weight of captive binturong can vary from 11kg to 20kg with the females normally being the larger of the sexes. The females are also the dominant of the sexes. The colouration of binturong fur can also vary from being almost pitch black, mainly black with orangey brown tips to the fur or black with silver tips to the fur with a very grey muzzle.

Reproduction:

The general age of sexual maturity for females is around 2 and a half years and for males around 2 years. It has also been known for males to reach sexual maturity slightly earlier in captivity, at around 1 and half years.

Their gestation period is around 91 days. It is believed that binturongs are one of approximately 100 species of mammal that are capable of delayed implantation. This allows them to mate but time the birth of their young to a season with favourable environmental conditions, or reduced stress from possible moves between zoos/enclosures. Typical birthing is of two-three offspring, but up to six may occur.

The maximum known lifespan in captivity is around 20 - 25 years of age.

Accommodation:

With regards to recommended enclosures sizes and designs for Binturongs, there is a wide range. Height is possibly the key factor in a Binturong enclosure. As naturally in the wild they would live high up in the canopies of the trees and only occasionally come down to the ground. Enclosures can be both enclosed tops or even open enclosures, as long as they designed correctly. Taronga Zoo in Sydney has a great open topped enclosure.

With enclosures that are fully meshed and with collections that are looking to breed Binturongs, it is strongly advised to ensure that the mesh used is no bigger than 2" square mesh.

The enclosure at Chessington Zoo that currently house three non-breeding Binturongs, is 4m high x 11.6m long and 11m wide (see fig.1 and 2).



(Fig 1)



(Fig 2)

With the outside enclosure, it is recommended that there are as many high branches/ poles as possible. It is also recommended that if you do house elderly binturong (maybe ones suffering with arthritis) that any diagonal poles/branches are not at a steep angle. There should also be at least two platforms for them to rest on, as you will probably find that one of these will become their favourite place to defecate. With the enclosure at Chessington Zoo you will see that there are also a few “rocking poles” for them to climb along (see fig. 3), as well as upside down branches to which their fruit is stuck onto. In the summer months it has been found that the Binturongs do suffer from the heat quite a bit, thus at Chessington Zoo we have made up a simple “misting” system for them, which helps them keep cool.



(Fig 3)

The inside dens at Chessington Zoo are roughly 2.9m long by 2m wide and 2.6 high. With the inside dens they can be fairly simple and basic, especially if the animals do not need to be locked in overnight (see Fig 4). The dens can just consist of a few climbing branches and a couple of shelves for them to sleep on. With regards to substrate inside the dens, just a fine cover of sawdust is sufficient. Some additional heating for the winter months is necessary, either a simple heater fan, a heat lamp or both.



(Fig 4)

With regards to the plants and bushes in the enclosure, it is advised to avoid any “spikey” plants such as pampas grass and even bamboo. The reason for this is that Binturongs have a tendency of eating the leaves of these plants which in-turn can get stuck in their throats as well as they can struggle to pass the leaves. Plants that also produce berries need to be considered as they will also eat these, so any toxic plants will need to be removed or at least the berries will need to be picked off before the binturong starts eating them.

Feeding

Binturongs are in the order of Carnivora, but are primarily frugivorous and eat a variety of fruits in the wild. They are also good hunters and are known to catch small rodents, birds and even small fish. They use their strong prehensile tails to hold onto branches while they reach out for the fruits.

Suggested diet for one animal

150g Apple
85g Pear
75g Tomato

58g Kiwi
197g Plantain
153g Melon/papaya/pine apple
210g Orange/Grapefruit

+/- 20 grapes
4 Dates
4 Prunes

Then the meat feed would be a choice of the following:

- 3 x Day old Chicks
- 1 x Quail
- 3 x Mice
- 1 x Rat
- 200g x Meat
- 3 x Eggs (boiled or raw)

The Binturongs at Chessington get fed three times a day; a scatter feed which consists of the grapes, dates and prunes. Then their main fruit diet which can be chopped up into various sizes or even sometimes given whole (these are spiked around the enclosure, ensuring that they have to exercise for the food). Due to the high acidity in oranges and grapefruits, this is only given to them once or twice a week. The third and last feed of the day consists of one of the above meat items. Some supplements are given to the Binturongs, such as Zooderm (3 x 5ml scoops) three times a week as well as Vionate three times a week.