



Sliders and Painted Turtles

Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

Found in lakes, streams, ponds, marshes, and slow-moving rivers with muddy bottoms. Sliders and Painted turtles are almost fully aquatic, but they will climb out of the water during the day to bask in the sun.

Water temperature: 75-82°F

Basking temperature: 85°F

Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*): native to the southern United States. Adult size female 12 inches, male 5-6 inches.

Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*): native to Canada down through Eastern North America to Mexico. Adult size 8 inches.

DIET

We recommend Mazuri aquatic turtle diet and dark leafy greens. Dark leafy greens, such as kale, collards, bok choy, and mustard greens are great choices. Aquatic turtles become more herbivorous as they age. Feeder fish are high in Vitamin A and can be a regular part of the diet. Earthworms can also be offered.

ENVIRONMENT

Enclosure: Aquatic turtles should be kept in an aquarium that provides them with plenty of space to swim, bask, and hide. The appropriate aquarium size for one slider is a tank at least 4 times longer than the turtle's carapacial (upper shell) length or about 20 gallons for one slider under 6 inches. The water should be deep enough to allow free swimming. A dry haul out area should always be provided. Use large aquarium rocks. Some turtles will ingest small rocks. Do not use metal weights to anchor plants. Some turtles will eat them. In outdoor enclosures, make sure the pool or pond is covered and safe from predators. Provide a platform or large, flat rocks so that the turtle can climb out of the water to bask or dry off.

Lighting: We recommend a full spectrum bulb made by Zoomed above the tank left on for 12-14 hours daily.

Heat: Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs for basking, and plastic or metal water heaters (glass water heaters can be used if they are protected from being broken). The basking temperature should be 85°F, and the water temperature 75-82°F. Keep a thermometer (unbreakable) in the water and regularly check the temperature of the basking area. Never use heat rocks or heating pads, as they can cause severe burns.

Water Quality: Aquatic turtles defecate in their water, so it is very important to provide a water filter. A heavy duty canister type filter like those made by Fluval are recommended. The filter needs to be powerful enough to handle the large amount of waste that is produced by aquatic turtles. The water should be clear with little or no visible fecal matter. Changing water weekly is recommended.

MEDICAL CARE

Exams: Bring aquatic turtles in once a year for an exam as well as to check for intestinal parasites. Getting a stool sample can be difficult. The easiest way to catch a stool sample is with a fish net or in a jar before the stool dissolves or is sucked into the filter.

Common Illnesses:

Ulcerative Shell Disease (Shell Rot): Caused by poor water quality. Symptoms include: soft spots on shell, abnormal shell growth, and abnormal peeling of scutes. Treatment includes scrubbing the shell daily with Betadine and dry-docking. For severe cases, the veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics.

Respiratory Infections: Caused by poor water quality, stress, lack of heat or improper nutrition. Symptoms include: bubbles from nose, swimming off-balance or at a tilt, decreased appetite, lethargy, or audible wheezing. Bacterial cultures and radiographs may be recommended. Treatment involves administering an appropriate antibiotic.

Ear infections: Caused by Vitamin A deficiency plus or minus bacterial contamination of the water. Symptoms include: decreased appetite, lethargy, swelling of the ears, discharge from the ears. Treatment involves draining the ears, administering an appropriate antibiotic and supplementing with vitamin A.

Hypovitaminosis A: Caused by improper diet. Symptoms include swelling around the eyes so that they do not lie flat on the head. Administration of vitamin A by the veterinarian and dietary changes are the treatment for this condition.