

CARE OF BOX TURTLES

HOUSING: Aquarium or pen large enough to permit range of activity. Outdoor access is preferable in warmer months. A basking light should be supplied above the preferred resting area. Provide fresh water in a container that is large enough for the turtle to bathe in. These turtles like some substrate to dig and partially bury themselves-clean sand, soil, peat moss are all acceptable, we do not recommend bark chips or small gravel that can be ingested and cause an obstruction requiring surgery.

LIGHTING: Provide a 12:12 light cycle for all reptiles. Reptiles must have total darkness at night in order to maintain a healthy feeding response. All species should have a regular source of UVB, whether from a quality lamp or natural direct sunlight (best-30 minutes per week consistently is enough).

HEATING: Varies depending on species. A gradient across the enclosure should be present, generally mid-70's to mid-90's. The coolest part of the enclosure should never drop below the low end of the range-this will affect the animal's ability to digest food, metabolize nutrients and fight off illness.

FEEDING: Box turtles are opportunistic omnivores in the wild, eating most anything edible that they encounter. The diet offered should be generally 50% protein, 50% vegetables, greens and fruits. Animal protein offered can include earthworms, insects, snails and pinkie mice. Greens should be finely chopped and mixed, as well as vegetables (including mushrooms) and fruits. Berries and melons are best, avoid feeding bananas frequently. The most important aspect of the diet for these animals is variety. Commercial turtle diets may be fed, but only as a 10-20% addition to a fresh diet. None of these is proven to be truly nutritionally complete.

VETERINARY CARE: Annual exams with fecal exams done every six months. Please always call your turtle's veterinarian with questions and concerns. This is a better resource than pet stores or the internet, with one exception: For more specific detailed care instructions tailored to the species of your turtle, visit the World Chelonian Trust website at Chelonia.org.