



## 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 30cm, male 12-15cm.

**Painted Turtle** (*Chrysemys picta*): native to North America. Adult size 20cm.

### DIET

**Majority:** Feeder fish (avoid Goldfish) live or previously frozen, earthworms, tubifex worms, slugs and shrimp with shells.

**Minority:** Trout or catfish chow, turtle brittle ( Nasco), insects.

**Occasional:** Some will except small amounts of vegetation like dark leafy greens or carrots.

### ENVIRONMENT

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 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.

**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.

**Substrate:** Use large aquarium rocks. Some turtles will ingest small rocks.

**Furniture:** 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.

**Water Quality:** Aquatic turtles defecate in their water, so it is very important to provide a water filter or change the water daily. Canister-type water filters, rapid sand filters or propeller driven fluidized bead filters are some more heavy-duty types of filters that can be purchased. The filter needs to be heavy duty, as it must handle a large waste load. And, even if using a filter, the water and filter need to be cleaned weekly. The water should be clear with little or no visible fecal matter.

## **MEDICAL CARE**

**Exams:** Bring aquatic turtles in once a year for an exam and a fecal test to check for parasites. We recommend repeating fecal tests annually. Getting a stool sample can be difficult. The easiest way to catch a stool sample is with a fish net before the stool dissolves or is sucked into the filter.

### **Common Illnesses:**

**Ulcerative Shell Disease (Shell Rot):** Caused by poor water quality. Symptoms include: Divots or 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, 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 and sometimes poor water quality. Symptoms include: decreased appetite, lethargy, swelling of the ears, discharge from the ears. Treatment involves draining the ears and administering an appropriate antibiotic.

**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.