



SLIDERS & PAINTED TURTLES **Diet and Care Recommendations**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Sliders and painted turtles are 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. Aquatic turtles should be kept in an aquarium that provides them with plenty of space to swim, bask, and hide. They can also be housed outdoors with access to a pool or pond, as long as the enclosure is secured to protect the turtle from escape and predators.



Red-Eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*): Native to the southern United States. Adult females can grow to be 12 inches long and males reach a length of 5 to 6 inches.

Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*): Native to Canada down through eastern North America to Mexico. Adults can reach a length of 8 inches.

DIET: We recommend feeding Mazuri aquatic turtle diet and a variety of dark, leafy greens such as kale, collard, bok choy, and mustard greens. Aquatic turtles become more herbivorous as they age. In addition to a formulated diet, aquatic turtles should get occasional earthworms and feeder fish, which are high in Vitamin A.

Temperature Parameters: Water: 75°F to 82°F and Basking: 85°F

ENVIRONMENT

The appropriate aquarium size for one slider is a tank at least 4x longer than the turtle's carapacial (upper shell) length; or about 20 gallons for one slider under 6". The water should be deep enough to allow free swimming. Aquatic turtles **must** have access to a dry haul-out area. Do not use small rocks or metal weights to anchor plants as the turtles may ingest them.

Lighting: We recommend using a full-spectrum bulb, the **Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by ZooMed**. Leave on for 12-14 hours daily. UVB lamps should be regularly changed every 6 months.

Heat: Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs (they emit heat but no light) for basking and plastic or metal water heaters. Keep an unbreakable thermometer in the water at all times and regularly check the temperature of the basking area. **Never** use under-tank heat pads or heat rocks, as these may cause severe burns.

Water Filtration: Aquatic turtles defecate in the water, so it is very important to use a heavy duty canister-type filter like those made by Fluval. **Clean water is crucial to the health of your pet.** The filter needs to be

powerful enough to handle the large amount of waste that is produced by aquatic turtles. Water should be clear with little or no visible fecal matter. Weekly water changes are also recommended.

MEDICAL CARE

Bring your aquatic turtle to a licensed veterinarian for annual health exams as well as to check for intestinal parasites. Obtaining a stool sample can be difficult; the easiest way is with a fish net or in a jar before the stool dissolves or is sucked into the filter.

Common Illnesses:

- a) **Respiratory Infections:** Caused by poor water quality, stress, lack of heat or improper nutrition. Symptoms include: bubbles from the nose, swimming off-balance or with a tilt, decreased appetite, lethargy, or audible wheezing. Bacterial cultures and radiographs may be recommended. Treatment involves administering an appropriate antibiotic.
- b) **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 (preventing the turtle from swimming). For severe cases, the veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics.
- c) **Impaction (Intestinal Blockage):** This condition is almost always caused by the ingestion of foreign objects or sand. Symptoms include: loss of appetite and inability to produce stools. Turtles exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away. Treatment can be difficult and often requires hospitalization. Avoiding the use of small rocks and sand can prevent this problem!
- d) **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 treatment for this condition.
- e) **Ear Infections:** Caused by Vitamin A deficiency +/- bacterial contamination of the water. Symptoms include: decreased appetite, lethargy, swelling and/or discharge from the ears. Treatment involves draining of the ears, administering an appropriate antibiotic, and supplementing Vitamin A.

Bring your aquatic turtle to a veterinarian right away if it is showing any of the following symptoms:

Diarrhea or inability to pass stool
Difficulty breathing; bubbling from nose
Sores on the shell
Loss of appetite
Extreme lethargy
Egg laying