

# aquatic turtle

## care sheet



Aquatic turtles can be found in or near water. Most aquatic turtles will leave the water to bask on dry land, but spend most of their time in the water.

### facts

includes:	map, red ear and painted turtles
average adult size:	5 to 11 inches long depending on species
average life span:	20 to 40+ years with proper care, depending on species
diet:	juvenile - carnivore adult - omnivore

*Will reach adult size in 1 to 2 years, depending on species and under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your turtle grows.*



**Note:** The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources on the back of this Care Sheet or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

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map, red ear and painted

## care sheet

### diet

A well-balanced aquatic turtle diet consists of:

- These aquatic turtles need a pelleted commercial diet.
- Commercial turtle treats and freeze-dried krill may be given as treats.
- Painted wood, map and red ear - Dark, leafy green veggies and finely chopped vegetables. They also benefit from comet goldfish, earthworms and insects as treats.

### feeding

Things to remember when feeding your aquatic turtle:

- Fresh, clean, chlorine-free water should be available at all times.
- Feed daily; need to be fed in water to eat.
- Consider a separate feeding tank as aquatic turtles are messy eaters.

### housing

- Size - Appropriately sized habitat (at least a 40 gallon breeder tank) with a screened lid so

the turtle can't escape. A good rule of thumb is 10 gallons per inch of turtle; adult turtles will require more room.

- Habitat - Aquatic turtles drink the water they swim in, so it needs to be changed frequently.
- Substrate - Slate, rock or gravel that is too large to eat is optional; water for swimming area; some aquatic turtles require a shallow area they can rest in the water with their head sticking out and they all require a turtle dock area to bask out of the water. Create basking areas for easy entry and exit to water.
- Temperature - Temperature gradient (95°F for the warm end/basking area and 75°F for the cool end/water); use a basking bulb and submersible heater as primary heat source.
- Lighting - UVB rays with full spectrum lighting for 10 to 12 hours a day is required. Incandescent lighting

### red flags

- Eye, nose or mouth discharge
- Abnormal feces
- Discoloration, bumps or spots on shell or skin
- Sneezing, runny nose
- Lethargic
- Overgrown beak
- Frantic swimming
- Swelling behind the tympanum

*If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian.*



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is needed for basking area.

- Do **not** house different turtle species together.

### normal behavior

- Turtles do not like frequent handling and may bite when frightened.
- Aquatic turtles are excellent swimmers.

### habitat maintenance

- Keep the habitat clean and remove uneaten food and feces right away.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week: place turtle in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell.
- Add clean, dechlorinated water, with a temperature range from 70 to 75°F before returning turtle.

### grooming & hygiene

Aquatic turtles occasionally replace their individual scutes as they grow.

### signs of a healthy animal

- Active and alert
- Eats regularly
- Healthy, hard shell with no lesions
- Clear, bright eyes with no swelling
- Healthy skin with no sores
- Clear nose and vent

## common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
GI tract parasites	Poor appetite, listlessness, possibly diarrhea and anal prolapse.	Consult your veterinarian as soon as possible.
Respiratory infection	Open mouth breathing, eye, nose and/or mouth discharge, sneezing; can be caused by a cold habitat.	Consult your veterinarian and ensure habitat is the correct temperature.
Shell rot/ulcers	Discolored or foul-smelling patches or pits on the shell that can become infected; may be caused by an unclean habitat or improper diet.	Consult your veterinarian and ensure daily cleanings and/or diet changes.
Eye or respiratory infection	Swollen eyes and sides of head; may be caused by a vitamin A deficiency.	Consult your veterinarian and use a vitamin supplement.

## shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized habitat
- Commercial aquatic turtle food
- Treats
- Substrate (optional)
- Heat fixture
- Basking bulb
- Basking area
- Thermometer
- UVB lighting
- UVB lighting fixture
- Submersible heater
- Under tank heater
- Book about aquatic turtles

## SOURCES

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on aquatic turtles and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all reptiles are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your reptile or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for reptiles and should consider not having a reptile as a pet.

Go to [cdc.gov/healthypets](http://cdc.gov/healthypets) and [petco.com/caresheet](http://petco.com/caresheet) for more information about reptiles and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the care needs of other species. Go to [petco.com](http://petco.com) for more information.



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