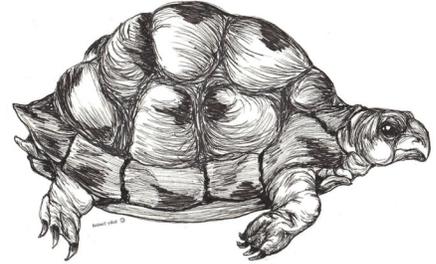


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Box Turtle
Terrapene Carolina,
Terrapene ornate and
subspecies



Necessities:

- Cage
- Bedding
- Heat lamp and bulb
- Uva & Uvb bulb and fixture
- Digital Thermometer

- Hiding spot
- Calcium
- Vitamins

Extras:

- Wading Pool
- Toys
- Treats

General:

There are basically 2 species of box turtles found in the United States: the eastern box, *Terrapene carolina* and the ornate box, *Terrapene ornata*. There are 4 subspecies of the *Terrapene carolina*: the eastern box, *Terrapene carolina carolina*, the Florida box, *Terrapene carolina bauri*, the Gulf Coast box, *Terrapene carolina major*, and the 3-toed box, *Terrapene carolina triungus*. There are 2 subspecies of the *Terrapene ornata*: the ornate box, *Terrapene ornata ornata*, and the desert box, *Terrapene ornata luteola*. They have a domed upper shell (carapace) and a hinged lower shell (plastron) that allows them to close up tight when afraid. They can live up to 25 years and come in a variety of different markings. Males have a curved area on the lower part of the plastron allowing them balance when they breed the female. Due to the destruction of natural habitats, it's becoming more and more difficult to find any of them. Unfortunately due to Federal legislation passed over 40 years ago it is illegal to sell any turtle or turtles under the size of 4 inches. Since they only grow about an inch a year it has not been economically feasible for them to be raised for sale. This could possibly mean no more box turtles in the near future. This where you can make a difference! The more you learn about them, the more you will love these guys. Maybe possibly even consider breeding them. They have A LOT of personality and are a lot of fun, especially in groups.

Handling/Exercise:

Never wiggle your finger in front of a box turtles nose! They may mistake it for a worm. That said, though, you must pick up your turtle carefully and hold on tight as they are very strong. Grab it on both sides, firmly, about midway and hold it with the dome of the shell slightly tipped towards you. When excited they do have a tendency to piddle a lot. They do not like being in the air and you should get to your destination quickly.

Turtles love to graze in a pesticide- and fertilizer-free yard on warm, bright, sunny days. They must be supervised at ALL times. A puppy pen - also known as an 8-Panel Exercise pen - works well for some containment and should be kept half in and half out of the sun with a shelter. Don't forget they burrow! They move very quickly when exposed to real sunlight and tend to blend and burrow into their environment well. An inexpensive children's wading pool makes a great playpen for in the house.

Hand sanitizers ARE NOT recommended. Wash with soap and water before and after handling, that is always the best!.

Housing:

Although you can use a large fish tank to house your turtle, building a cage that will accommodate them is preferred for long-term care. It is possible to use large plastic boxes but there is a higher risk of melting and fire and most plastics release toxic fumes when heated. A large wooden box is preferred. They have a tendency to pace around the edges of their cage without realizing the glass is a wall and they will continually bump their heads into it. If you do use a glass cage, covering the outside of at least 3 sides will help lower their frustration. The minimum size can be determined by multiplying the length of the turtle by eight (bigger is better).

There are many different choices of substrates that can be used, such as Carefresh™ bedding (a recycled paper flake) alfalfa pellets for rabbits (which are also edible), Aspen wood shavings, coconut fiber, potting soil or even newspaper (but the ink gets all over everything). Whichever you use, it is very important to make sure that it stays clean and dry at all times. We have found that they really like the Carefresh™ for burrowing into. The humidity level should be between 60 and 80%. Be careful of mold and mildew

Any caging you use must be cleaned regularly with a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach and 9 parts water). Rinse thoroughly. Clean all dishes or decorations also. The animal should never be in the enclosure when you are cleaning and you should never use ANY household cleaners!

Outdoor enclosures for summer time should be well built with solid walls and bottom with drainage (do not use chain link or wire) that extend at least one foot underground (turtles love to burrow and are excellent diggers), protective screen tops to keep out predators and other wildlife, shade cloth to cut down sun exposure and additional shelters (if need be, a heated shelter) inside the pen to get out of the sun and elements.

Always have working smoke detectors set up close to or in any heated enclosure.

Temperature:

As they come from warm humid climates, the climate where you live will determine the housing you need. For example: Western Washington has a very cool humid climate, consequently a Box turtle would not do well outside other than during the summer months. On the other hand, Eastern Washington gets much drier during the summer and would allow for longer summer outings. Indoor enclosures are necessary for Washington. Young turtles should have a basking site temperature of approximately 95° F while the overall enclosure temperature should be approximately in the 80's° F during the day and at night can drop to the mid 70's° F. During the winter, daytime temperatures can be approximately 5° to 10° F lower, but a basking site of approximately 85° to 90° F is needed.

There are many different heating units available. We use infrared ceramic heat emitters (make sure to follow the manufacturer's guidelines) that do not produce light and are very long-lasting placed at one end of the enclosure to provide a heat gradient so that the turtle can regulate its own body temperature. All heating units should be attached to an adjustable thermostat. The heating unit(s) should then be placed so that the turtle cannot injure itself or knock the unit down. By placing thermometers at both the hot end and the warm end, you can double check temperatures easily. We also recommend that a smoke alarm be set up in the enclosure. UVB fluorescent light must be provided for good shell growth and development. These lights should be placed within 12 inches of the top of the turtle's shell for proper UVB absorption. Reptile Glo® now makes a "Desert 10.0" bulb that works well for turtles. The lights can be set on a timer so that the turtle gets approximately 12-14 hours of light during summer months and approximately 10 hours during winter months. Make sure that the room and enclosure have good air circulation.

Although all turtles and tortoises will generally eat less and be less active during winter months, DO NOT let them try to hibernate. You can raise the temperature a couple of degrees and increase the time your turtles lights are on. A PROPER hibernation is used for breeding and requires a lot more knowledge on your part, it cannot be done at the room temperatures of your home. It's also mother nature's way of culling the weak.

Diet:

Turtles eat a number of different foods and should be offered a variety daily, such as: kale, collard greens, mustard greens, clover, romaine lettuce, dandelion, beet tops, carrot tops, timothy hay, alfalfa hay and grass clippings (all pesticide and fertilizer free), melons, peas, corn, beans, strawberries, tomatoes, carrots, apples, bananas, peaches, apricots, grapes, broccoli, pears, cherries, squash, cauliflower. Fruits (20%) and vegetables (60%) make up approximately 80% of the diet. Meat proteins such as: earthworms, mealworms, crickets, canned dog food and soaked monkey chow can make up approximately 20% of the diet. All foods should be chopped into bite sized pieces approximately the size of the head and sprinkled with a calcium supplement such as RepCal® and a vitamin supplement such as Herptivite® or Vionate®. For turtles kept indoors, the addition of calcium carbonate to their diet is very important and can be sprinkled on their food 3 times a week (approx. 1% of diet by weight) and every 2 weeks with a supplement containing D3 such as Herptivite® or Vionate®. Care must be taken so that the turtle does not get addicted to only a few foods. There are also commercial diets available to supplement (not replace) the diet with. A turtle's appetite is dependent on temperature.

Water:

Turtles should be allowed to soak in warm water at least every other day so that they may drink and defecate. The water dish should be shallow enough that the turtle can dip its head down into the dish without having to climb up on the dish. Turtles don't swim and they will drown if the water is too deep. Any fouled water must be removed immediately. All dishes and utensils should be kept away from human food preparation areas and be cleaned with a 10% bleach and water solution. Always wash your hands before and after handling.

All turtle dishes and utensils should be kept away from human food preparation areas and be cleaned with a 10% bleach and water solution. For more information we recommend reading: "The Box Turtle Manual" by Philippe de Vosjoli and Roger Klingenberg, D.V.M..

Health & Wellbeing:

It is impossible to hibernate a turtle in Western Washington without the proper equipment. Although they may eat less during winter months, keep them warm. Otherwise they may get pneumonia or other health problems.

Any animal, reptile, amphibian, dog, cat or fish can harbor the salmonella bacteria. It is very important to always wash your hands before and after handling. DO NOT use hand sanitizers! Soap and water is always the best.

Since almost all of the box turtles are wild caught and their diet consists of uncooked vegetables, insects and grazing in the yard, yearly stool samples are a must. Intestinal parasites are difficult to get rid of but very easy for them to pick up.

Also be aware of airborne toxins and fumes such as air fresheners, incense, fumes from household cleaners, neighbors spraying insecticide, fumes from home improvements such as new carpets, paint, glues, wood floor finishes, etc. For these reasons also we do not recommend leaving your turtle alone for a weekend in a closed-up home. If you purchased your pet from us, we do provide boarding accommodations. Just give us a call! Our favorite veterinarian is Dr. Obegi at Allpet Vet - 206-365-1102.