



LISA M. CARR, DVM
drcarr@marylandexotics.com

240-687-1414

AQUATIC TURTLE CARE

CAGING

A 30-gallon tank with a screen top or a Rubbermaid container 30"x15"x8" is a good started enclosure for small turtles. Eventually the turtle will need at least a 70-gallon tank or a small pond (depending on the species).

SUBSTRATE

Gravel creates an environment with a lot of surface area that promotes bacterial growth. Additionally, gravel is often ingested and can lead to intestinal impactions so we do not recommend using it. Plain glass on the bottom of the tank is best. For decoration, you can use a couple of larger rocks and plastic plants that are easy to scrub off with a dilute bleach solution.

WATER CHANGES

Change the entire tank once every 2 weeks. Additionally, change 50% of the water twice weekly. Use an under water filter to help keep water clean between changes. Remove all decorations from the tank, scrub with soap and water, rinse well and disinfect with dilute bleach water solution (1:15). Then rinse well with plain water.

BASKING AREA

Most turtle species need to bask. Offer a sturdy area for your turtle to get its entire body out of the water. Stacks of flat rocks or a small milk crate with a rock on it both work well.

LIGHTING AND TEMPERATURE

A basking light should be offered and the basking area should reach a temperature of 85-90 degrees. A standard 75-100 watt light bulb in a clamp lamp should be sufficient. You should also have a fluorescent 5.0 UVB bulb over the tank. Be sure there is not glass or plastic between the bulb and the turtle because these materials will filter the UVB. Both lights should be on 10-12 hours daily. During the summer, try to get your turtle out into natural sunlight as much as possible. DO NOT leave your turtle outside in a glass tank or enclosed container because it will overheat. Try a small children's pool with a screen top over it and make sure part of it is shaded. Dogs, cats, raccoons, etc like to eat turtles so DO NOT leave your turtles unattended.

DIET

Offer floating turtle pellets and/or turtle sticks. Also offer leafy greens such kale, collards and red and green leaf lettuce (float them in the water and remove uneaten portions). You can also teach your turtle to eat in a separate container of water. This helps to keep his tank cleaner. Crickets, goldfish, and earthworms (all store-bought only) can be offered occasionally as treats.