

Box Turtle Care Guide

Lifespan: Depending on the level of care, 30-50 years, sometimes more

Length: Around 5 inches long

Housing

It is best to create the most natural environment as possible for box turtles, so it's best to keep them in a proper outdoor enclosure, if at all possible (temperature and space dependent). If that is not possible, adults need at least a 40 gallon tank, with 3 of the 4 sides covered with black foam board. This prevents them from continually walking into the glass, and also provides insulation. They need a large shallow water dish, big enough to sit in, as well as multiple hides/plants etc. Males and males cannot be cohobbed, and males and females should not be kept together either.

Handling/Stress Levels

Box turtles do not do well with being handled, and it should be avoided if possible. They get stressed out very easily, and things like changing their environment/improper husbandry can be detrimental to them.

Heating and Humidity

They need a basking spot reaching 90-95 degrees fahrenheit, and an ambient temperature of 85-88 degrees. At night the temperatures can dip to 70-75 degrees, and you can switch off the basking lamp. They also need a UVB to provide much needed calcium. This also can be shut off at night, and is best put in a double dome with the basking lamp. In order to keep the rest of the tank warm, you can use either a heat mat (with a thermostat), or a ceramic heat emitter. Whichever one of these you use, should be on all the time. Please buy a thermometer to watch the temperatures in the tank.

Humidity and Substrate

They need a high humidity of 60-70%, so their substrate should be something that holds moisture well, such as eco earth or something similar. They also enjoy burrowing, so you should put in enough dirt for them to dig in. With higher humidity comes a great breeding ground for bacteria and fungi. Please change the bedding regularly even if it doesn't look dirt. Also please buy a hygrometer to ensure correct humidity levels.

Diet

Box turtles are omnivores, which means they need both plant and animal matter. Animal protein should make up 60% of their diet, plant matter should make up the rest of it.

They should have insects regularly, prepared box turtle food occasionally, veggies regularly, and pinkies and other sources of meat less frequently. The plant matter the turtle gets should consist of 10% fruit, 10% dark leafy veggies, and 20% squash, peas, green bean, grated carrots, okra etc. Safe fruits include: Grapes, apples (without the seeds), blueberries, raspberries, peaches, strawberries, kiwis, bananas etc. Always do your research before feeding a new food. Dust the food 2-3 times a week with a calcium dust (without phosphorus). It's best to mix foods when feeding the turtle e.g. don't feed it all its fruits in one sitting, mix them with the insects, veggies etc.