

## Turtle Information Care Sheet



### Check list

- 2ft or larger aquarium
- Aquarium Foam
- Aquarium Stand
- Aquarium Hood
- Turtle Deck or Driftwood
- Heater
- Filter
- Clamp Lamp
- Basking Globe
- Reflector
- Reptile UVB Tube 10.0
- Turtle Neutraliser Block
- Reptile Water Conditioner
- Turtle Bio Cleaner
- Turtle Pellets
- Frozen Turtle Food
- Aquarium Background

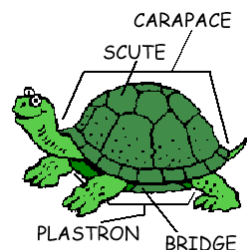
### SETTING UP YOUR JUVENILE TURTLE TANK

Select a position for your tank that will have filtered sunlight. Fill the tank with a minimum depth of 10cm. Add your Repti Safe 5, Turtle Bio Cleaner and Turtle block to the water. Set your heater to 22 - 25°C and situate it along the back wall of the tank ensuring that it is fully submerged and allow extra water coverage for evaporation. Situate your filter in the corner next to the heater. Position the turtle dock or drift wood, make sure your turtle has plenty of room to bask on top of it. Insert the basking globe into the clamp lamp and attach the clamp lamp to the tank pointing it towards the turtle dock. Place your turtle in the tank. Place the cover glass on top of the front half of the aquarium. Put the Reptile tube in the reflector. Place the reflector on top of the back half of the tank. Make sure there is no glass under the reflector. Place the aquarium hood over the top of the tank. Decorate the back of the tank with the aquarium background. You can also put a thin layer of aquarium gravel along the bottom of the tank if you wish. Thoroughly rinse the gravel first to remove any dust. There are also plastic vine plants, which can hang down into the tank to create a real jungle feel. Rocks may also be used but need to be placed so that they will not fall or trap your baby turtle or act as abrasives to the skin and plastron.

### THE TURTLE SHELL

A turtle's shell is divided into two sections.

The shell covering the top of a turtle's body is called the carapace. It is made of a hard substance called scutes. The shell covering the underneath of the turtle's body is called the plastron. The carapace and the plastron are joined along the sides by a part called the bridge.



### TYPES OF TURTLES

The two most common turtles sold as pets in Victoria are the Eastern Long-Neck Turtle (*Chelodina Longicollis*), which is also known as the Eastern Snake-Necked Turtle and the Macquarie Short-Neck Turtle (*Emydura Macquarii*), also known as the Murray River Short-Neck Turtle.

#### Juvenile Eastern Long-Neck Turtle

The Eastern long-neck turtle has a flat, smooth shell and a carapace that can vary in colour from a light reddish brown to dark brown or almost black. The shell underneath is yellowish, white or cream with black lines. It has a small head with a short snout, extremely long neck with tubercles or knobs and clawed, webbed feet. If roughly

handled, long-necks will exude a clinging foul-smelling fluid from the glands adjacent to the bridge. The average carapace size of a long-neck is 20-25cm, although it can reach up to 30cm in length.

### **Juvenile Macquarie Short-Neck**

The Macquarie short-neck turtle has a broad, oblong shell that is wider towards the back end. The carapace is light to dark brown or olive green in colour and the edges at the rear of the shell may be flared, especially in adult males. The edges along the sides can be upturned. The shell colour on the underside of these turtles ranges from bone to a very pale yellow. They have a relatively small head compared to the rest of their body and have a distinctive cream-coloured or yellowish stripe which runs from the corner of their mouth to their neck and a yellow spot on each side of their chin. These turtle's have small eyes with a yellow iris and a round black pupil. The average carapace size is 30cm, although it can reach up to 40cm in length. In most cases the female has a larger carapace than the male.

## **PURCHASING YOUR TURTLE**

Your friendly Passion for Pets staff member can help you choose your new turtle. As young turtles will spend most of their time in the water it is best to house them in a glass tank. We recommend a minimum 2ft tank for the first year (the larger the better though). At Passion for Pets we hand feed all of our turtles so they are very friendly and not at all shy.

## **ARRIVING HOME**

Your Passion for Pets staff member will place your turtle in a carry box to travel home. Introduce your turtle to its new home and wait until he is comfortable before offering his first meal. Turtle's can carry salmonella. This will only be caught through poor hygiene. Always wash your hands before and after handling your turtle.

## **HANDLING YOUR JUVENILE TURTLE**

You should avoid picking smaller turtles up by the edge of the carapace, particularly with juveniles or those with calcium deficiencies (ie. soft shell), as this practice may result in shell deformities. Ideally let small turtles sit in the palm of your hand, with the other hand gently cupped over the surface of the carapace to prevent any sudden jumps onto the floor. If the turtle is struggling too much, then hold the turtle with your fingers under the plastron and thumbs on the carapace

## **FEEDING**

The Eastern long-neck turtle is mostly carnivorous while the Macquarie short-neck is an omnivore. Turtles enjoy a varied diet and no one food should be constantly given. Your turtle must be in the water while feeding, as they cannot swallow when they are on dry land. We recommend feeding a turtle pellet in conjunction with frozen turtle food, frozen brine shrimp, crickets, woodies, earthworms, mealworms and small live fish for both species. Calcium powder can be sprinkled on the food first before giving it to your turtle. Both types of turtle enjoy eating lettuce. Short-neck turtles should also be fed fruit and vegetables such as spinach, parsley, cabbage, broccoli, pumpkin, apple, pears, stone fruits etc. After your turtle has finished eating remove any uneaten food to prevent spoiling.

Do not over feed as this can cause obesity and other health problems. Juvenile turtles should be feed once a day in the first year of their life. Each meal should be equivalent to the size of the turtle's head, with pieces no wider than its mouth. In general the water temperature should be between 22 -25 °C for feeding. Temperatures below and above this will cause problems with digestion and/or regurgitation.

## **LIGHTING**

Your turtle requires a Reptile tube to provide its UVA & UVB requirements. It is important that your reflector with the Reptile tube is not positioned on top of glass as, the glass filters out all of the UVA & UVB. UVA & UVB are essential for normal bone and shell growth. You will need to replace your UV light every twelve months, as they may still emit visible light but the UV properties become diminished. The addition of a Turtle Block helps to give calcium and help control the pH levels. A basking light is also required to provide heat and additional UV.

## **HIBERNATION**

Turtles are cold blooded and can not control body temperature. If left unheated in an aquarium or living in an outdoor pond in winter, low temperatures slow down the turtle's bodily functions until they are ticking over just enough to maintain life. Heart rate, breathing and all physical movement are all extremely slow and this condition will be maintained until temperatures rise sufficiently for active life to be resumed. If your turtle is going to hibernate it is recommended that you should stop feeding one month before cold weather sets in as this will allow the digestive

tract to be emptied before hibernation commences. Food that is left in the stomach stops being digested. This causes the food to rot and in turn poisons the turtle and leads to its death. You should NOT let young turtles hibernate in the first year of their life.

## **TANK MAINTENANCE**

Using a gravel cleaner you should siphon 1/3 of the water out and replace it with fresh water once a week. Always add your water treatments before emptying it into the tank. At the same time you will need to wash your filter pads, these will need to be replaced monthly. Using a net be sure to remove all uneaten food to prevent it from spoiling. Replace your turtle neutraliser block as it dissolves. You should do a PH test of the water once a week and adjust the levels if required. Turtles like their PH to be between 7.0-7.2 and the PH level must be maintained at this level to reduce the start of disease.

## **TEMPERATURE**

Your young turtle requires a temperature of around 22 - 25°C. If you place a thermometer in your turtle's water you will be able to accurately monitor the temperature. If the water temperature is too high for long periods they may die, and if the temperature is too low they will stop eating, food may not be digested properly or they may even attempt to hibernate which is dangerous for young turtles. You should have an air temperature of 22 - 26°C.

## **SHEDDING**

It is quite normal for your turtle to shed its skin and shell as it grows. The turtle's shell will lift and flake off leaving a new shell underneath, while the skin will shed leaving new skin underneath.

## **HEALTH**

A healthy turtle is active, alert and has bright and glossy eyes that should not be sunken back into the sockets. If handled it will typically retract its head and limbs back into the shell or struggle vigorously. The turtle should swim straight in a horizontal position or with the rear end lowered slightly. They should not wheeze when breathing, swim tilted back or sideways, nor should they float or bob around the surface of the water, as this may indicate a respiratory infection.

The turtle's shell should be hard and the limbs and skin should be free of cuts, abrasions, sores, discolouration, lumps, or swellings. You should seek veterinary attention if you notice any of these signs.

## **SOFT SHELL**

This condition is unfortunately common amongst young turtles kept indoors, and will usually lead to their death. All neonates have soft shells upon hatching and will usually begin to harden within two weeks. Soft shell can occur due to a lack of calcium in a turtle's diet. It can also be caused by not enough ultra-violet light (UVB) which enables the turtle to synthesise calcium in its body. In some cases it can be reversed, but will require plenty of calcium, sunlight and the right amount of care. Feeding the same types of food everyday may bring about soft-shell due to lack of calcium. So remember to vary the diet as much as possible.

## **ACCIDENTAL DROWNING**

As turtles are air breathing animals there is always the possibility for drowning to occur in certain circumstances. Sometimes when hatchlings and juveniles are kept in water too deep or is too turbulent to allow them to surface, the turtle may accidentally drown. Their feet may also become trapped in the intake of uncovered filtration units or under and between rocks, logs or other aquarium furnishings.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The Eastern long-neck and the Macquarie short-neck turtle can live up to 50 years or more.

There are books specifically written on the care and health of turtles. These can be a great source of additional information for you.

## **CONTACT US**

Our friendly staff are always available to answer your questions so please don't hesitate to contact us for further information.