

CAL ZOO'S REFERENCE SHEET

AMERICAN BOX TURTLES

Latin name	<i>Terrapene carolina</i> sp.	Maximum length	6 - 9 inches
Native to	United States	Approximate life span	Sources claim over 100 years

GENERAL INFORMATION

Box Turtles available on the reptile market are typically field collected specimens. They are available during a limited season when they are naturally active. California Zoological Supply sells only Box Turtles that have naturally emerged from hibernation. There are several types of turtles available under this heading. Most common are the Three Toed, Ornate, Eastern, and the larger Gulf Coast Box Turtles. All of these varieties will do well in captivity with a little care given to them. Box Turtles will sometimes arrive with their eyes closed. This is due to being in a dark box during their transit. Upon arrival to a new enclosure, soak the Box Turtles in room temperature water just high enough to reach the top of their legs. Soak them for 30 - 45 minutes. Remove them and place Terramycin™ eye ointment in their eyes. Apply Terramycin™ eye cream to eyes once a week. This will help prevent "puffy" eyes. Box Turtles are naturally curious and active animals. Try to provide them with an interesting home with plenty of things to check out.

ENCLOSURE

20 gallon or larger sized aquarium is adequate. Provide as large an enclosure as possible so your turtles have a chance to roam around and get some exercise. Provide them with some pieces of wood or well-anchored rocks to climb around on and explore. Your Box Turtles will also appreciate a large piece of cork bark or something else that they can retreat into for a little privacy.

SUBSTRATE

For bottom substrates there are a variety of choices. For any of them start with a layer of newspaper for easy clean up and extra absorption. On top of the paper use Zoo Med CAGE CARPET or a layer of rabbit pellets or alfalfa. Rabbit pellets or fresh alfalfa help keep odor down, are inexpensive and provide another food source. Newspaper alone will work fine, but is a bit boring in appearance.

TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Box Turtles should have daytime temperatures of 80 - 85°F, allowing for a nighttime temperature drop to 70 - 75°F.

HEATING

Reptiles need to be able to regulate their body temperature, so a temperature range must be provided. Use a Zoo Med REPTITHERM® UNDER TANK HEATER (U.T.H.). Leave it on 24 hours a day. U.T.H.'s take a few hours to reach their optimal temperature. For easy heat control, use a Zoo Med REPTI-TEMP™ RHEOSTAT in conjunction with the U.T.H.'s. They will also slightly help to increase the air temperature if needed. Always use at least one thermometer, two is optimal, in all reptile & amphibian enclosures. One thermometer on the cooler side, and one on the warmer side. A Zoo Med DELUXE ANALOG MIN/MAX THERMOMETER works great to show the high and low temperatures in a 24 hour period.

LIGHTING

Full spectrum lighting is required for Box Turtles. The Zoo Med REPTISUN 5.0™ with its high UVB and UVA output is an excellent choice. The UVB is necessary for the Box Turtles mineral absorption, and the UVA will help with your new friend's mental well being. All reptiles and amphibians need a photo period (light cycle) . A plug in timer (for your lights only, do not use a timer for your heating devices) works well to develop a regular photo period of 8 - 10 hours of light, 14 - 16 hours of darkness. Reptiles and amphibians cannot see the red light spectrum, so a red bulb is ideal for nighttime viewing of your Box Turtle.

FOOD & WATER

Box Turtles are omnivorous, and will require a varied diet. The diet should consist of whole animal foods, fruits and vegetables. Whole animal foods include snails, slugs, crickets, mealworm beetles, and earthworms. Some good choices for fruits and vegetables would be banana, tomato, melon, squash, broccoli, strawberries, peaches, and corn. The diet should also include a prepared food like Zoo Med ZOO MENU® BOX TURTLE FOOD. Dust fresh fruits & vegetables with Zoo Med REPTIVITE® three times per week. Provide a large, shallow water bowl that the turtles can easily climb in and out of. Soak in room temperature water just high enough to reach the top of their legs every other day. Box Turtles need water for many uses, they use it for drinking and to clean their eyes, & nostrils. Water also aids in proper waste elimination, so change your water often. Water is also used for regulating the body temperature to help keep cool.

NOTES

Always wash your hands before and immediately after handling reptiles and amphibians. Never leave live food long term with reptiles & amphibians. They can inflict severe harm, or even kill your pet. If your animals take some time to eat or you feed them at night, leave a slice of potato, carrot or dry dog food for the live food items to eat. Your local pet shop is an ideal source for reptile and amphibian related books and supplies. Please make sure you read and become familiar with any instructions provided with reptile support products you may purchase. . For further information on reptiles and amphibians we recommend you read *REPTILES MAGAZINE* and *THE VIVARIUM*. California Zoological Supply hopes you have enjoyed reading this reference sheet on American Box Turtles. We hope that our guidelines will assist you with the care or possible purchase of your new pet.

This sheet may be copied in its entirety only.