CARE SHEET : AQUATIC TURTLE (reptile)

INCLUDES RED-EAR, MAP AND PAINTED TURTLES

Average Adult Size  5-11 inches long
Life Span  20 - 50 years with proper care, depending on species
Diet  juvenile - carnivore / adult - omnivore

Will reach adult size in 1 to 2 years, depending on species and under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your turtle grows.

Diet: A well balanced aquatic turtle diet consists of:
* Pelleted commercial diet
* Commercial turtle treats and freeze-dried krill may be given as treats
* Painted wood, map and red ear - dark, leafy green veggies and finely chopped vegetables. They also benefit from comet goldfish, earthworms and insects as treats!

Feeding: Things to remember when feeding your aquatic turtle:
* Fresh, clean, chlorine-free water should be available at all times.
* Feed daily, need to be fed in water to eat.
* Consider a separate feeding tank as aquatic turtles are messy eaters.

Housing:
* Size - appropriately sized habitat (at least a 40 gallon breeder tank) with a screened lid so the turtle can’t escape. A good rule of thumb is 10 gallons per inch of turtle; adult turtles will require more room.
* Habitat - aquatic turtles drink the water they swim in, so it needs to be changed frequently.
* Substrate - slate, rock or gravel that is too large to eat is optional; water for swimming area; some aquatic turtles require a shallow area they can rest in the water with their head sticking out and they all require a turtle dock area to bask out of the water. Create basking areas for easy entry and exit to water.
* Temperature - turtles are cold-blooded reptiles and external sources of warmth are essential; temperature gradient (95 degrees F for the warm end/basking area and 75 degrees F for the cool end/water); use a basking bulb and submersible heater as primary heat source.
* Lighting - UVB rays with full spectrum lighting for 10 to 12 hours a day is required. Incandescent lighting is needed for basking area.
* Do not house different turtle species together.

Normal Behavior and interaction:
* Turtles will bask regularly under a heat lamp in a dry, warm area
Turtles do not like frequent handling and some turtles may bite when frightened. May hibernate during winter months but should not hibernate in regular household temperatures. Aquatic turtles are excellent swimmers.

**Habitat Maintenance:**
- Keep the habitat clean and remove uneaten food and feces right away.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week: place turtle in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell.
- Add clean, dechlorinated water, with a temperature range from 70-75 degrees F before returning turtle.

**Grooming and Hygiene:**
- Aquatic turtles occasionally replace their individual scutes as they grow.
- Keep the habitat clean and pick up leftover food and feces right away.
- Because all turtles are potential carriers of infectious diseases and salmonella, always wash your hands before and after handling your turtle and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.
- Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a turtle and should consider not having a turtle as a pet.

**Signs of a healthy turtle:**
- Active and alert
- Eats regularly
- Healthy, hard shell with no lesions
- Clear, bright eyes with no swelling
- Healthy skin with no sores
- Clear nose and vent

**Red Flags:**
If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.
- Eye, nose, or mouth discharge
- Discolored, bumps or spots on shell or skin
- Lethargy
- Frantic swimming
- Abnormal eyes
- Sneezing, runny nose
- Abnormal feces
- Overgrown beak
- Swelling behind the tympanum (external eardrum)

**Common Health Issues:**
- GI tract parasites - symptoms, poor appetite, listlessness, possibly diarrhea and anal prolapse.
- Respiratory Infection - symptoms, open-mouth breathing, eye, nose and/or mouth discharge; sneezing. Can be caused by a cold habitat. Ensure habitat is appropriately warm.
- Shell Rot/Ulcers - symptoms, discolored or foul-smelling patches or pits on the shell that can become infected. May be caused by an unclean habitat or improper diet.
- Eye or respiratory infection - symptoms, swollen eyes. May be caused by a Vitamin A deficiency.

**DO NOT USE SPRAYS OF ANY KIND AROUND TURTLE TANK INCLUDING INSECTICIDES OR AIR FRESHENERS.**