



Practice Limited to Birds, Reptiles and Exotics

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## *Mud / Musk Turtle Care Sheet*

This includes information on ***mud turtles, musk turtles, and side-necked turtles***. These turtles live in shallow bodies of warm water with moderate to heavy vegetation and soft muddy bottoms. They live 10-15 years on average and vary in size depending on species (maximum is generally 9 inches). These turtles are nocturnal and shy towards people, though they can be very aggressive toward other turtles and need to be housed separately or only with similar-sized members of the same species. When threatened they can release foul-smelling secretions.

### **Housing**

Glass aquariums can be used for indoor housing, the larger the better. A 20 gallon enclosure is fine for a juvenile, but adults need larger. The aquarium should have shallow water with a depth the same as the widest part of the turtle (approximately 2-4 inches for hatchlings and 8-12 inches for adults). A dry area, such as a pile of rocks or a turtle platform, should be provided so they can bask and maintain their body temperature.

### **Lighting & Heating**

A broad spectrum heat/basking bulb should be placed over the basking side of the enclosure, with temperatures reaching 90° F, and a full-spectrum fluorescent bulb should be used over the entire enclosure to provide UVA and UVB, which is essential for proper health. ***UV bulbs should be changed every 12 months.*** Water temperatures should be kept 75-78° F. Abrupt temperature changes should be avoided.

### **Water**

Optimal water quality is essential for proper health, so a filter is a must. However, this should not replace frequent water changes which is needed to provide a safe environment and free from as much bacteria as possible. These turtles require hiding places under the surface of the water (such as flower pots, caves, tubes, etc.) as well as aquatic plants, both of which make them feel more secure.

### **Diet**

These turtles are omnivores, with hatchlings and juveniles eating more carnivorous fare and adults eating more vegetation. Young turtles should be fed daily, while adults only need to be fed 2-3 times per week. Variety is essential to a proper diet and a mixture of insects like crickets, mealworms, wax worms, earthworms, and snails should be offered alongside fish and vegetation such as green leafy lettuce (kale, collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, and spinach). Commercial pellet diets are also available but ***should only constitute 30-40% of the diet.*** Calcium supplementation is also essential, and powdered calcium with vitamin D can be spread on all foods. Cuttlebones can also be placed in the aquarium to provide calcium.

### **Cleaning**

Enclosures should be cleaned with dilute bleach monthly to help prevent build up of bacteria. Always wash your hands after handling your turtle as they can carry salmonella and other bacteria, which may be harmful to people.

***We strongly recommend annual health examinations on all exotics!***

