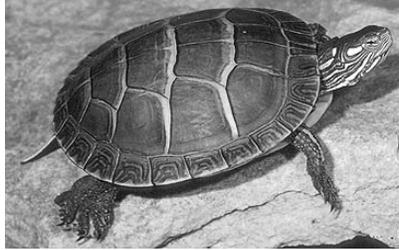


## Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic

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### Care of Aquatic Turtles

**Intro:** Aquatic turtles include pond and marsh turtles, snapping turtles, and mud and musk turtles. These turtles have webbed feet and spend most of their time in water, although many like to bask on logs or rocks. They are mainly carnivorous, but often eat vegetable matter. Captivity requirements for aquatic turtles require integrating their natural environment with a practical natural set-up. Adequate diet, water, lighting, temperature, cage and flooring must be provided.

**Diet:** In the wild, turtles eat fish, snails, insects, and tadpoles. Commercial fish or turtle foods can be used; look for a product mostly made of fish or fish meal. Purina Trout Chow is a complete and balanced dry pellet formula for farm-raised trout that turtles thrive on when used as a major portion of their diet. It can be dropped in the tank like fish food, or soaked first to soften it. Some turtles will not care for it at first, but will accept it after continued exposure. Don't give up on it too soon. Greens such as mustard, collard, beet, turnip, endive, romaine, spinach, kale, or seaweed can be offered. Avoid iceberg lettuce as it has little nutritional value. Greens can be supplemented with apples, oatmeal, watercress, and other vegetables.

**Captivity Requirements:** Water turtles should be housed in large aquariums with water as deep as the shell is long. Water temperature should range from 75°-85°F; this can be accomplished with under tank or submersible heaters. Turtles also need a dry 'haul-out' spot where they can bask under a high quality UVB light. Temperatures under the basking light should be 85°-90°. To keep the water clean, frequent water changes are absolutely necessary in addition to a good filtration system. Test the effectiveness of your filter by having the water tested at a pet store specializing in fish and water quality.

**Diseases and Clinical Signs:** The most common signs of illness in pet turtles are lethargy and refusal to eat. These signs often indicate underlying medical illness and your turtle should be taken to your veterinarian for examination. Another common sign of illness is the appearance of swollen eyes and should also be examined by a veterinarian. Salmonella bacteria are normal flora of the turtles' intestines. These bacteria can cause intestinal upset, vomiting, and diarrhea in humans and serious illness in young children and the elderly. To prevent illness, always wash hands after handling turtles or cleaning the cage. Do not clean the turtle or the cage near food preparation areas.