



Common Box Turtle *Terrepenne carolina*

- Box turtles are named for their hinged plastron (lower shell). They withdraw their heads, necks, and limbs as a defense mechanism.
- Represented by several subspecies including Eastern Box turtle (*T. c. carolina*), Three Toed Box turtle (*T. c. triunguis*), Gulf Coast Box turtle (*T. c. major*), and Florida Box turtle (*T. c. bauri*).
- Occurs throughout most of central, south central, and eastern United States.
- Relatively small turtles with a domed carapace that is blackish to gray, tan, to olive brown with yellowish to orange radiating blotches, stripes, and streaks on each scute. The three toed box turtle tends to have a solid or only faintly marked pale yellow, olive-yellow, olive brown, or grayish brown carapace. Skin on the head, neck, and limbs is often heavily mottled with yellow or orange.
- Box turtles, if given the proper care, and live for 40-50 years or more and require long term care and commitment.

Size

Adult sizes of these turtles typically ranges from 4-6" shell length.

Housing

Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a 50-70 gallon, at minimum, sized plastic tote or steel trough or stock tank, or better yet, custom built indoor enclosure can be used and is lightweight and easy to clean. Glass aquariums are poor choices to maintain box turtles, where they are subject to stress and confusion. Substrates that enable burrowing such as potting soil will work well. Outdoor pens can work during the warmer months in Wisconsin, and provide ample access to natural sunlight. Outdoor pens must have a perimeter at least 8-9" deep and at least 12" high. Ensure predators cannot access an outdoor cage. Although they derive much of their water from their food, provide a shallow water dish or pan within the enclosure. Change every 2-4 days or if fouled. Soak them in warm water at least weekly if low humidity is an issue. Provide an artificially heated hide box for added security.

Providing proper temperature and humidity is critical. Provide a thermal gradient with a ceramic or radiant heat emitter, and overhead florescent and UV incandescent lighting on a heavy duty clamp lamp, ambient temperature should be within 75-85 degrees F and the basking area from 85-90 degrees F. Maintain a light cycle of 12-14 hours per day. Monitor temperatures with a quality thermometer.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, eastern box turtles are omnivorous, feeding on various fruits, vegetable, and planet matter as well as insects, earthworms, and other invertebrates.

Feed box turtles in captivity twice per week with nightcrawlers, crickets, waxworms and trout chow on occasion. Box turtles will also accept many fruits and vegetables including apples, tomatoes, strawberries, squash, zucchini, collard, mustard, and some dark leafy greens. Many of these are readily available in any grocer's market. Do NOT give iceberg lettuce, grain products, or dog and cat food. Be sure any food items given are pesticide or chemical free. Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements in box turtle diets whenever possible. Many vitamin supplements are also widely available.

Handling

Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens