



Mud and Musk Turtles *Family Kinosternidae*

- Mud and musk turtles are fairly small, largely aquatic to semi aquatic turtles with a highly domed, nondescript grayish, brown, or blackish gray carapace and reduced plastron. Some species have a dorsal keel, and most have two pairs of yellowish to pale stripes on the head and neck.
- Depending on species, these turtles range from southern Canada, through most of the United States, and into Mexico and Central America.
- If provided the proper care, these turtle can attain longevity of 20-30 years or more.
- For novice pet owners interested in acquiring an aquatic to semi aquatic turtle, mud and musk turtles are a suitable choice.

Size

Fairly small turtles, these species seldom exceed a shell length of 3 to 5 inches.

Housing

Housing must be sturdy and escape proof. Mud and musk turtles are largely aquatic and spend little time basking out of the water. Provide a 20 gallon aquarium or similar sized tub or enclosure with water maintained at 76-78 degrees F using a submersible heating element. These turtles are not strong swimmers, so water should be kept fairly shallow enough for the turtle to reach the surface easily. Use a submersible canister water filter to help maintain water clarity and cleanliness. A substrate is not required for these turtles, although medium sized gravel can be used. Additional rocks, logs, live or artificial foliage can also be provided for additional foraging and hiding opportunities.

Although these turtles are infrequent baskers, an overhead basking light should still be provided on a 12 hour day/night cycle. Maintain basking area at around 85-90 degrees F. Floating turtle docks, or other slabs can be provided for additional basking sites.

Feeding/Diet

Mud and musk turtles are primarily carnivorous species in the wild, feeding on small, slow moving fish, frogs, crustaceans, mollusks, aquatic insects, other invertebrates, and carrion (dead animal matter).

In captivity, these turtles will readily accept a number of different food items including commercialized turtle pellets, earthworms, bloodworms, small feeder fish or cut up fish, or feeder insects. Provide a varied diet for optimal health and for vitamin A and D3 supplementation.

Handling

Mud and musk turtles may use their long necks to occasionally nip when handled. Maintain handle of these turtles towards the rear of the shell.

****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****