

KEEPING FRESHWATER TURTLES

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Introduction

This fact sheet covers the keeping of the two main types of turtle available in Victoria. The Snake-necked Turtle *Chelodina longicollis* and the Murray River Short-necked Turtle *Emydura macquarii* and its subspecies and has emphasis on keeping hatchlings.

The beauty of keeping these types is that they occur naturally in Victoria making keeping so much easier.

Other types of turtle may have specific requirements not mentioned in this fact sheet. If in doubt contact us with your concerns.

Many names used for baby turtles or hatchlings are wrong and misleading. 'Penny Turtles' are hatchlings and will grow to normal adult size! 'Terrapins' are not found in Australia!

Housing

Hatchlings are best kept in an aquarium with the normal filters, aeration and heating you would use for keeping tropical fish. The water pH should be neutral, at 7.0. A basking platform must be provided for the hatchling to get out of the water and 'bask'. Lighting over the basking platform can be as simple as a 40Watt blue globe if used in conjunction with a full spectrum UVA/UVB fluorescent tube. These UVA/UVB fluoro's can be purchased from Craigs Critters.

If the enclosure is not filtered change the water daily but don't let the temperature vary dramatically, as you would do with fish!

During the summer months an outdoor enclosure is great. Make sure it has a sunny and a shaded area. They will move from one area to another to control their body temperature. Ensure the outdoor enclosure is covered in mesh otherwise birds or cats will eat them! And ensure a basking area is available same as if in an aquarium.

Feeding

Hatchlings will naturally chase and eat food that moves such as mosquito larvae and tadpoles. We find it better to introduce them to food that is readily available to everyone, anywhere you live.

Frozen bloodworms, tiny pieces of chopped lamb or ox heart are great. Avoid meats such as mince, its fatty and messes up the tank

Commercial 'turtle sticks' which contain calcium and vitamins are great and they will also readily eat 'fish food flakes'

Water plants are also an essential part of the hatchlings diet, something with a grassy leaf sooner than filaments. In desperation a little pak or buk choy leaf may do.

We recommend a variety of the above-mentioned food; all offer varied benefits to the hatchlings health.

Health

Additional health substitutes are available such as a Turtle Salt and other such products, which can be added to the aquarium or pond water. These may promote strong shells and reduce possible bacteria type problems. All are worth considering.

Shell Infection, Short-neck Turtles are more likely to suffer scratches on the underneath part of their shell, the plastron, than Long-necked Turtles. This can cause series infections. So whether a hatchling or adult Short-neck, it should not have to walk over gravel or any rough surface. In the wild it climbs logs or mud banks to bask, Long-neck Turtles are not so susceptible.

Advice

If you have any questions or concerns with keeping your turtle or of any products that may assist contact us at Craig's Critters. If in Doubt contact Craig's Critters.