

# Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

## Box Turtles (*Terrapene carolina*)

### General Information

There are ten species of Box turtles in the United States and Mexico. The most common forms are; **Eastern Box Turtle**, **Three Toed Box Turtle**, **Gulf Coast Box Turtle**, **Ornate Box Turtle**, **Florida Box Turtle** and the **Desert Box Turtle**. Box turtles get their name from the ability to completely close their shell. They are able to accomplish this because of a hinge on their bottom shell. Box turtles range in size from 4-8 ½ inches, with males being larger than females. Box turtles are long-lived pets and with proper care these turtles can live 20-40 years or more. Box turtles are not extremely difficult to sex, males are usually more brightly colored on the front legs, have bright orange eyes, and have longer tails.



### Temperature and UV Lighting

Box turtles need to be kept between 80-88 degrees during the day and the temperature can drop to about 60 at night. Humidity needs to be maintained between 60-80% and this can be accomplished by daily misting. These turtles are capable of hibernating but temperatures for proper hibernation need to be less than 60 degrees during the day. Box turtles require 12-14 hours of UVB light for proper health and growth. This light allows the turtle to produce vitamin D3. The vitamin D3 produced by UVB metabolizes the calcium in the turtles' diet. In general it's what makes a turtles' bones hard and without it they can die. This process of inadequate UVB and calcium is called Metabolic Bone Disease. When kept outdoors, no UVB lighting is needed, natural sunlight covers all requirements. Also it is very important to change your UVB light every 6-8 months, after this time the light stops producing adequate UVB. If you're not sure if your UV light is still producing UVB, bring it in and we'll be happy to test the light for you.

### Housing

The cage for a box turtle should be big enough for it to have enough room to move around easily. Our recommendation is a 40 gallon or larger terrarium. Box turtles can also be kept outside in areas where the weather is similar to their natural habitat. If you plan to keep your turtle outside make sure the area is secure. These turtles can dig and have been known to escape under fences.

### Bedding

The best type of bedding would be some type of bark or Zoo Meds' Eco Earth. These beddings hold moisture very well allowing a higher humidity in the cage. Ideally the bedding should also be kept a few inches deep to provide a place to burrow.

### Calcium

Box turtles also require a calcium and vitamin supplement. This supplement works with the UVB light allowing the turtle to receive the proper amounts of calcium and vitamins. This should be used every day as babies and reduced to 1-2 times a week as adults. Calcium is sold in a powder form and is sprinkled on the insects, fruits, and vegetables that you feed your turtle. You should apply a very light coating to the food items, being careful not to waste any excess powder. When kept indoors the supplement must contain Vitamin D3, because the UVB light alone does not produce enough D3 by itself. Once the turtle is large enough to live outdoors, you cannot use a D3 supplement. Natural sunlight allows the turtle to produce the perfect amount of D3 to keep it healthy. Over supplementation of D3 can be harmful to your turtle.

### Food

Box turtles are omnivores and their diet needs to be balanced between live foods, fruits, and vegetables. Ideal live foods are superworms, mealworms, waxworms, earthworms, snails and occasionally pink mice. Live food should make up 50% of the diet. The other 50% percent of their diet should include the following fruits and vegetables; collard greens, mustard greens, red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, dandelion greens, hibiscus leaves and flowers, green onions, spinach, green beans, zucchini, frozen mixed vegetables, apples, bananas, strawberries, figs, peaches, mango, papaya, cantaloupe, grapes, blackberries, and blueberries. A mixed diet of these food items, five to seven times per week, is ideal and will ensure proper growth and health.

### Cleaning and Handling

Any fecal matter or left over food should be cleaned out several times a week. The bedding should be completely changed once a month and fresh clean water should be provided at all times. The inside of the terrarium can be cleaned out with an appropriate reptile cage cleaner, we recommend Natural Chemistry's Healthy Habitat. Box turtles can be handled on a daily basis and always wash your hands after handling them.

**Prehistoric Pets Inc.**

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