

## **Rules/Guidelines. As a Turtle Foster, you agree to the following:**

- Even our fosters have to be legally able to possess a turtle. In Mississippi, this requires the possession of one of the following:
  - Resident Sportsman's License
  - Resident All Game Hunting and Freshwater Fishing License
  - Small Game Hunting and Freshwater Fishing License
  - Non-Resident All Game Hunting License

\*If you do not currently have any of the above licenses, one can be easily and inexpensively obtained at Walmart or online here: [https://www.ms.gov/mdwfp/hunting\\_fishing/](https://www.ms.gov/mdwfp/hunting_fishing/). The Hunter Safety Education Course is NOT required for the Small Game Hunting and Freshwater Fishing License. You will need to submit a copy of your license with your program application.

- Handling of the turtle(s) should be kept to a minimum. Turtles carry salmonella and turtles stress easily. Limited handling benefits both you, your family, and the turtles. The turtles should never be handled by anyone under 14 years of age.
- Due to the aforementioned salmonella risk, you must ensure that hands are washed properly anytime anyone handles the turtle(s), the tank, décor, or any other surface touched by the turtle.
- You must be able to furnish your own supplies (supply lists are below.) We can provide you with commercial pellet food and any necessary vet/medical care, but all other supplies must be furnished by you or your school.
- You must have a plan in place for times when you will be away for longer than a weekend. The turtles will need to eat every day to every other day (depending on age), so someone will need to be available to check on and feed the turtles when you cannot.
- If housing more than one turtle, you will need to monitor them for aggression, bullying, or intimidation. If signs of any of those occur, the turtles will need to be separated. You can house them separately if you have the space and resources; otherwise, the aggressive turtle will need to be returned to CMTR.
- You will be responsible for monitoring the turtles' health, weight, and size. If you're fostering more than one turtle, you will need to find some way to remember which turtle is which, so that you can determine if that turtle is thriving or is perhaps sickly or is getting bullied out of a fair portion of food. Also, if one turtle is growing at a much faster rate, or if one appears to be the "runt" of the group, the odd-sized turtle will need to be separated. Larger turtles can harm smaller ones. We ask that you check in with us monthly and report the turtle's overall health, weight, measurements, and behavior.
- You need to understand that sometimes hatchling turtles just die. It's called Failure to Thrive, and no one knows exactly why it happens. You should be prepared for this should you foster a hatchling, and your family should be prepared as well.
- You will be responsible for feeding the turtle every day to every other day (depending on age). The preferred food at the beginning for aquatic turtles is a variety of commercial diets including ZooMed, Mazuri, Hikari, Reptomin, and Omega One. We will provide the commercial diets, but you will need to provide any other food items (see list at end of this document.) Do not house the turtle with any other species of animal, including fish. Other animals (fish, snails, crabs, etc.) can harm the turtles.

- If you are a homeschooler and the turtle(s) will be housed in your home, you are to keep the turtle(s) safe from other pets, young children, and visitors.

## Hatchling Box Turtles

Tips on setting up a proper enclosure for a baby box turtle. They are mostly land-dwellers, but do love to soak and swim in shallow water. An appropriate set up for him at this age can be fairly simple.

\*If you are planning to keep a turtle awake through winter (not hibernate), you need to mimic summer conditions. 12/14 hours of "sunlight" per day and warm, summerish temps.

- A 10-20 gallon Rubbermaid-style tub (solid color walls, not clear)
- 3-4" of plain top soil
- Plant saucer for a water dish. Needs clean water every day. Turtle will poop and pee in water, this is normal.
- Plant pot cut in half lengthwise for a hide
- Piece of slate tile or terra cotta tile for feeding dish (rough surface will help keep his beak trimmed down naturally)
- Fake plant decor if desired. Just make sure nothing is too close to the sides so he doesn't use it to climb out.
- UVB light and heat light. ZooMed sells a handy combo kit. [https://smile.amazon.com/Zoo-Med-Tropical-Heat-Lighting/dp/B00CYDE8IG/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?keywords=5.0+uvb+combo&qid=1567526080&s=gateway&sr=8-2](https://smile.amazon.com/Zoo-Med-Tropical-Heat-Lighting/dp/B00CYDE8IG/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=5.0+uvb+combo&qid=1567526080&s=gateway&sr=8-2) Pro Tip: Once the "heat lamp" burns out, you can just use a standard household light bulb. You don't actually need the fancy heat bulb. You DO need the fancy UVB bulb though, and that bulb needs to be replaced every 12 months. (Even if the light still shines, the UVB will be used up in a year.) You want one side of the enclosure to be room temperature. The other side should be warm - around 85/90F.
- You may need an additional light fixture and red heat bulb for nighttime if your house gets really cold (below 65).
- If you have other pets, you might consider constructing some type of screen lid for the enclosure. Dogs don't mean harm to turtles, but are rarely able to resist chewing on them. Even the nicest of dogs can and do kill turtles all the time. (It is our second most common injury type at our rescue, right behind car strikes.) Just make sure the lid is screen, not glass or plastic. UVB rays won't penetrate glass or plastic.
- Spray bottle or mister. To keep humidity in the enclosure around 60%, mist the substrate down once a day.
- Vitamin supplement you can dust on the food once/week: [https://smile.amazon.com/Rep-Cal-SRP00300-Herptivite-Multivitamin-Supplement/dp/B00BS96HRM/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?keywords=reptivite&qid=1567526494&s=gateway&sr=8-4](https://smile.amazon.com/Rep-Cal-SRP00300-Herptivite-Multivitamin-Supplement/dp/B00BS96HRM/ref=sr_1_4?keywords=reptivite&qid=1567526494&s=gateway&sr=8-4)

- Calcium supplement you can dust on the food once/week. (Needs to have Vitamin D3 and be phosphorous free.) [https://smile.amazon.com/Rep-Cal-SRP00200-Phosphorous-Free-Ultrafine-Supplement/dp/B00BS96G1E/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?keywords=reptical&qid=1567526509&s=gateway&sr=8-3](https://smile.amazon.com/Rep-Cal-SRP00200-Phosphorous-Free-Ultrafine-Supplement/dp/B00BS96G1E/ref=sr_1_3?keywords=reptical&qid=1567526509&s=gateway&sr=8-3)

We recommend at least 15 square feet of space for an adult. This can be done indoors or outdoors, but predator protection must be a paramount concern if housing outdoors. Turtles are at the bottom of the food chain and are preyed upon by almost every other animal.

Here is a good care sheet that can give you some additional tips. <http://www.austinsturtlepage.com/Care/cs-easternboxie.htm>

Feeding at this age should be once a day, and only as much as would fit in his head if his head were hollow. At around one year of age, cut back to every other day. As an adult, you can cut back to every 3rd day. Over-feeding is a very common turtle pet owner mistake and can lead to shortened lifespan, organ failure, and deformities.

Food list. (Not a complete list, just a list I keep handy of foods people can try. Not every box turtle will like every item.) I would highly recommend looking into getting one or more of the commercial diets listed below. Mazuri, Reptomin, and Omega One seem to be the taste favorites among most of the box turtles we have through our facility. All hard pelleted food should be soaked in water first to soften.

Proteins (should make up about 60% of adult diet, 80% hatchling diet)

- Earthworms
- Canadian Nightcrawlers
- Red Wigglers
- Baby wigglers (same as above but very tiny)
- Crickets
- Snails
- Wax Worms
- Dubia roaches
- Superworms
- Phoenix Worms/Calci Worms/Black Soldier Fly Larvae (available online at GeorgiaCrickets.com. These are really good worms to feed. Rich in calcium.)
- Blood worms (Petsmart. They're frozen, so you'll need to thaw them out and make sure they're room temp before serving.)
- Mazuri tortoise diet
- Mazuri aquatic turtle diet
- Reptomin turtle diet
- ZooMed turtle diet
- ZooMed canned turtle diet (high in fruit content)

- Omega One turtle diet
- Hikari turtle diet
- *(all commercial turtle diets listed above can be found on Amazon and other online stores)*
- Fall blend koi fish pellets (available at most pet stores and Amazon)
- Cooked, un-seasoned chicken
- Cooked, un-seasoned beef heart
- Cooked, un-seasoned turkey
- Cooked, un-seasoned chicken or beef liver
- Cooked, un-seasoned fish such as salmon, talapia, etc. Watch sodium content. Don't feed anything too high in sodium.
- Cooked, un-seasoned shrimp. Shrimp can be high in sodium, so this should be a treat only.
- Boiled egg (or scrambled in the microwave, no seasoning). You can also feed the shell of the egg - it's a great source of calcium.
- Thawed, room-temp pinky mice (if turtle is small, may want to cut the mice up some)
- Fresh uncooked fish (i.e. minnows that you have left from that day's fishing trip, or small pieces of freshly caught fish. BE CAREFUL about bones. Small bones, such as is in minnows are fine. Larger bones need to be removed from larger fish.)

**NEVER: bugs from your yard (some are toxic, others may have passed through pesticides), hot dogs, lunch meats, or any meats with high sodium or fat content, dog/cat food, or mealworms (or any other insect/larvae with a hard exoskeleton)**

Vegetables (should make up 20% of adult diet, 10% hatchling diet)

- Romaine lettuce
- Turnip greens
- Collard greens
- Mustard greens
- Spring mix
- Kale
- Endive
- Dandelions-flowers, leaves, and stems (only get these from a yard that you know has not used any chemicals)
- Prickly Pear cactus pads and fruit (remove spines if not spineless variety)
- Hibiscus flowers
- Rose flowers (petals only never the leaves or stems)
- Zucchini
- Cucumber
- Yellow squash
- Butternut squash
- Pumpkin (just don't feed too much. Pumpkin is a natural laxative.)
- Sweet potato
- Carrots (finely chopped)
- Bell peppers (green, yellow, red, orange)

- Mushrooms (white)

NEVER: spinach, beets, cauliflower, cabbage, iceberg lettuce, white potatoes, weeds you can't identify, or mushrooms from your yard

Fruits (should make up 20% of adult diet, 10% hatchling diet)

- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Blackberries
- Raspberries
- Bananas
- Peach
- Watermelon
- Cantaloupe
- Honey Dew Melon
- Apple (NO pit or seeds)
- PawPaw Fruit
- Mulberries
- Mango
- Papaya

NEVER: citrus fruits, apple seeds/pits, grapes, cherries, wild berries you can't 100% identify as safe