



THE CENTER FOR

BIRD & EXOTIC ANIMAL MEDICINE

www.TheExoticVet.com

Box turtle care sheet

Please make certain that all box turtles has a good UV source, the best available are Mercury Vapor UV bulbs. During the day, they should have 12 hours of light exposure, and during the night a supplemental heat source is necessary to keep them above 75 F. The Bean Farm is an excellent source for all the supplies that you may need.

Dark leafy greens: 30-40% by volume

Choose as wide a variety as possible. Collard and mustard greens, kale, broccoli, escarole, spinach, swiss chard, parsley, and romaine are excellent choices, as are carrot and beet tops. Unsprayed dandelion leaves and flowers, and nasturtium and hibiscus blossoms from the yard are excellent additions. Avoid pale greens such as head lettuce and celery tops. Wash and chop all greens into appropriately sized bites.

Bulk vegetables: 30-40% by volume

Frozen vegetable mixes are excellent choices; as are peas, beans, carrots, beets, corn, and summer and winter squash. Sweet potatoes are a special favorite of most box turtles. Choose bulk vegetables that are fresh or frozen, not canned. Wash and chop all bulk vegetables into properly sized bites.

Fruit: 10-20% by volume

Grapes, papaya, melon, strawberries, kiwi, mango, oranges, peaches, pears, figs, etc. are all good choices. Wash and chop all fruits appropriately. Turtles are especially fond of red items

Insects: 10% by volume

Insects are more of a treat item, so use much like we would eat candy. Meal worms, waxworms, bee-moth larvae are all good protein sources, as well as earthworms, but if you feed earthworms, only offer once weekly and offer other "bug" sources the rest of the week.

Calcium

Box turtles in captivity have a high need for calcium that cannot be adequately met through diet alone. A turtle is almost certain to develop metabolic bone disease without calcium added to its food. To date there has not been enough research into turtle nutrition to know exactly what amount these animals require, therefore, it is advisable to use a supplemental source of calcium several times weekly.

There are several brands and formulations of calcium for reptiles currently available. Choose a supplement that is at least 30% calcium by weight, and contains no phosphorous or vitamin D3. Phosphorous can bind calcium, making it unavailable to use, and dietary vitamin D3 has been implicated in kidney disease later in the turtle's life. Sprinkle the turtle's food lightly with calcium two to three times weekly.