

Care of the Chinese Box Turtle

Husbandry & Diet Information

Quick Facts about *Cuora flavomarginata*

- Lifespan: 20 years
- Average weight: 400-750 grams
- Shell length: 14-16.5 cm (5.5-6.5 in)

Natural History

This charming box turtle is native to the rice paddy and pond environments of Taiwan and southern China.

Reproduction

The nesting season ranges from March to August, with up to 3 or 4 clutches laid annually. Clutches averaging 1-3 eggs. Incubation temperatures should be maintained at 28°C (83°F), humidity at 90%-100%, with ample aeration. Eggs hatch within 75-90 days.

Enclosure

The Chinese box turtle is a semi-aquatic species, and an outdoor enclosure with an accessible pond is best. For indoor housing, this species can be set up in a 30-55 gallon (114-208 L) aquarium with wood branches and a rock for basking. The tank should have an aquatic set up which consists of half land with a basking area and half water.

50% Land

- Maintain humidity between 60%-70% during the daytime.
- Provide a basking site at 29-32°C (85-90°F) and full-spectrum (UVB) lighting
- Avoid any substrate that is small enough to be ingested such as bark, sand, millet, or walnut shells

50% Water

- Provide a shallow panel of water in the tank measuring 7-20 cm (3-8 in) in depth
- As this species originates from the tropics, maintain water temperature between 24-26°C (75-80°F) with the use of a submersible tank heater
- At night, the temperature SHOULD NOT drop below 24°C (75°F).

Diet

Asian box turtles are omnivorous, with a preference for vegetables.

- Dandelion greens, collard greens, mustard greens, red leaf lettuce, dill, parsley, escarole, and endive are all healthy vegetables for your turtle. These dark, leafy greens are high in calcium as well as vitamin C and vitamin A. Avoid large amounts of kale and spinach, as they can bind dietary calcium thereby preventing absorption. Do not offer iceberg lettuce as this does NOT contain the nutrients they needs. Also try adding timothy hay to greens to increase dietary fiber and aid in digestion.
- Dietary protein sources include fresh feeder fish, trout chow, earthworms, slugs, phoenix worms, butterworms, crickets, mealworms, and waxworms. Earthworms, butterworms, and phoenix worms are the most nutritious; mealworms and waxworms are high in fat and should only be offered as treats.
- Berries such as pitted cherries, raspberries, and blueberries may be offered as a treat.
- Dust food items with a calcium powder containing vitamin D3.
- A vitamin supplement can also be mixed with food to raise dietary vitamin A levels.

Fresh water should be available at all times.

Common Problems

Any changes in appetite and defecation should be noted and you should call the veterinarian.

Common problems include:

- Hypocalcemia and metabolic bone disease
- Bladder stones
- Respiratory disease
- Dehydration
- Eye lesions
- Poor diet
- Constipation
- Pyramiding

References

Kaplan M. Box turtles. Herp Care Collection Web site. 1994. Available at <http://www.anapsid.org/box.html>. Accessed March 21, 2015.

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