



FRESHWATER TURTLE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



Revised: Dec 2005

Housing:

Freshwater turtles can be housed in a variety of environments depending on the research criteria. However they should meet the following criteria.

- Wherever possible turtles should be group housed and tanks should be large enough to allow ample swimming space.
- Tanks should have enough water in them so that the largest turtle can fully submerge in the water.
- All tanks should include an area where the turtles can haul out of the water and bask (basking lights should also be provided).

Environmental Conditions

- **Light:** Photoperiod is at the discretion of the researcher, however some light / dark cycle is required (12 hours light/12 hours dark is standard).
- **Water:** water temperature can be anywhere between 17-24°C but it should remain constant at whatever temperature is chosen.
- **Aeration:** is not necessary. A flow-through water system is preferable but not necessary. If water is stagnant then the water should be changed once a week to maintain water quality

Environmental Enrichment

Environmental enrichment can be provided in the form of basking lights, a blue light to simulate more natural lighting conditions and rock or other material in the tanks.

Regular Care

1. The researcher is responsible for feeding and cleaning of the turtles.
2. Food should be offered a minimum of 3 times per week, although daily inspection of the animals is required.
3. Turtles should be provided with a ration of "NUTRAFIN Max Turtle Gammarus Pellets" (a vitamin enriched floating pellet food). Lettuce should also be presented for bulk, and chicken hearts periodically as a supplement (once every other week).
4. Turtles should be provided food for approximately 1 hour, any uneaten food should be removed to prevent fouling of the water.
5. Turtles should be monitored during feeding to ensure that all eat an adequate ration (eg. satiation). If some turtles do not eat because of territorial behaviours of larger or more aggressive turtles, the less aggressive turtle should be separated during feeding to ensure adequate access to food.
6. Tank water should be replaced weekly. Remove turtles prior to cleaning and refilling the tank. The inside should be hosed and the walls, floor and rocks scrubbed to remove faeces and slime build-up. No soaps or disinfectants are used at this time only warm water. Once tank is cleaned, add water and turtles back into the tank.
7. **WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER AFTER TOUCHING TURTLES OR HANDLING ANY PART OF TURTLE TANK. TURTLES MAY CARRY SALMONELLA WHICH CAUSES FOOD POISONING (See Zoonoses).**

Identification & Records:

Tank cards identifying species, source, number, primary and associate researcher, and emergency contact person are to be posted on each tank in cases of multiple species use or within the confines of the room for uni-species projects.

A record must be kept of species, supplier, numbers, arrival date and disposition.

Hagen Aqualab

Animal Utilization Record

Researcher:

Species	Nº	Arrival Date	AUP Nº	Supplier	Disposition
Red Eared Sliders	1	Sept 3, 2000	00R000	Donated by John Q Public	

Veterinary Care:

Veterinary care is on a consultative basis only. If a problem is suspected, contact the manager, **Dr Jim Bogart (X 58728)** or **Dr Ron Brooks (X 53944)**. If a problem is suspected contact Aqualab Staff and further assistance will be provided.

All mortalities and morbidities in the Aqualab must be reported to an Aqualab staff

member. Any Turtle that dies of unknown causes or is suspected of dying of a disease related problem must be bagged, tagged and taken immediately for a post mortem examination, the results of which must be reported to the manager.

Excessive handling of turtles generally causes them to develop lesions on the back of the head. This is caused by frequent and repeated rubbing the back of the head on the edge of the carapace. This happens when the animals are repeatedly disturbed causing withdrawal of the head into the carapace.

Monitoring: 7 days a week, at least once per day.