

Caring for your new pet turtle. Red-eared Sliders & Painted turtles

Turtles are fun and entertaining pets.

Easy step by step set up. (For more information see [Turtle care.](#))

1. Find a place out of direct sunlight and drafts to set up your new turtle habitat.
2. Rinse/wipe down the entire tank (inside and out) and all decorations with 2 percent bleach solution (NO, soaps, detergents or other cleaning materials).
3. Place substrate in bottom of the tank.
4. Add in a place for your turtle to climb out of the water to bask.
5. Attach basking light far enough away that your turtle will not come in contact with it but close enough that the area is 85-88°F.
6. Add all other decorations.
7. Fill with dechlorinated water remembering not to submerge the basking site.
8. Install your filter and turn on.
9. Place aquarium heater in a secure location that your turtle can get to it. Allow water to stabilize between 75-86°F.
10. Add your new pet turtle.



Turtle care.

About your turtle.

Red-eared sliders and painted turtles are semiaquatic reptiles that can be kept in solitary as well as community conditions. They are very beautiful display animals and full of energy making them a lot of fun to watch.

The red-eared slider is found from Indiana to New Mexico and south to the Gulf of Mexico. While the painted turtle is found from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, south to Georgia, west to Louisiana, north to Oklahoma, and northwest to Oregon.

Red-eared sliders may reach a shell length 12 inches while painted turtles may only reach 10 inches. Due to potential adult sizes it is important to make the appropriate accommodations for them as they grow.

Females of both species are larger than the males and males have a noticeably larger tail and longer fore-limb claws.

These two turtle species can live in excess of twenty years if given the proper care.

It is not recommended keeping these two turtle species together as to avoid possible illness or other complications.

The following information will help you create a happy and healthy home for your new pet turtle.

Choosing a home for your turtle.

A 10-15 gallon aquarium will accommodate 1-2 turtles smaller than 4 inches. A 20-30 gallon tank can comfortably fit one 4-5 inch turtle with 10 extra gallons for each additional roommate. One turtle eight inches or more will require a minimum tank size of 55 gallons. The more room you can provide your new pet the healthier and happier it will be. With a larger enclosure comes the added bonus of watching your new pet play naturally while oftentimes providing you with quite comical entertainment.

Adding substrate.



Substrate is not necessary in your turtle environment and many turtle keepers prefer the ease of no substrate when it comes time to clean. However it may stimulate your turtle to dig and has added visual appeal.

Basking site.



Choose a place to put what will be your new turtles basking site. It can be at one end or even an island and should be just above the water line so that your turtle can get their whole body out of the water. This can be anything from a stack of large smooth well placed rocks to wood; thick aquarium cork or prefabricated basking sites manufactured for just this purpose (check your local retailer). I have even known owners that used bricks. Whatever you decide to use just make sure that if it can be tipped over it will be and so remember that aquariums are made of glass. Also arrange this so that your turtle can't escape from its new home.

Décor.

You can add decorations to your turtle's tank like wood, rocks or plants. Turtles will actively investigate, bite and at the very least attempt to climb on everything in their environment. Be sure to clean these items thoroughly before adding them to your turtle's new home.



Heating and lighting.

An incandescent light can be used for heating the basking area to between 85-88°F. There are also ceramic heating coils designed for basking also available. Be sure that the type of fixture you are using can not fall into the water or come in contact with your turtle. A screen cover can help prevent this.

If the room temperature you are keeping your turtles enclosure is in the mid seventies then additional heating for the water is not necessary. If its not or falls below that at night then you will need to include an aquarium heater to help maintain the water temperature at 78-86°F. If you choose a glass tube heater then it will need to be placed where your turtle can't get to it to prevent it from getting broken.

If additional lighting is necessary, then full-spectrum lights may be used.

Turtle food.



Good nutrition is one of the keys to keeping your turtle happy and healthy. HBH Turtle Bites is a complete and well-balanced diet that will promote good turtle health. A good prepared diet will include vitamin D3 and calcium. You may also feed them a variety of other foods such as feeder fish, earth worms, romaine and red leaf lettuce, kale, thawed frozen vegetables, squash and fruit. Always remove any uneaten food from your turtle's habitat to help reduce fouling the water.

Filters.

There are many filter types to choose from that can be used in your new turtles home. Anything from sponge filters and undergravel filters (both require that you change the water 1-3 times per week as needed) to hang on the back, canister and wet/dry filters. Choose a filter type that creates the best environment for your pet turtle to thrive in.

Water depth and water changes.

When it comes to red-eared sliders and painted turtles, as long as the water covers the entire body they will do fine. Many people like to watch their turtle swim around and engage in all sorts of entertaining behavior. For this you will need much deeper water and will need to make sure that your turtle can still get itself out to bask.

Salmonella.

It is very important to know that salmonella is always present in turtles and may lead to illness in both the turtle and humans. By keeping the stress on your turtle low and washing your hands and anything else that comes in contact with your turtle and or its environment you can greatly reduce any risk. It is especially important that children are not allowed to handle these pets unsupervised and that they take the proper precautions. If the steps above are followed you will enjoy your new pet turtle for many years to come.