

FEEDING AQUATIC TURTLES

WHAT TO FEED

- Most aquatic freshwater turtles are omnivores so eat a mixture of plant material and animal matter. The exact balance of this will vary over a turtle's life. For example, young growing animals naturally eat more live food whereas adults naturally eat more plant matter.
- Different species will also have slightly different dietary requirements with some continuing to be primarily carnivorous even as adults (such as Soft-shelled turtles) whereas others naturally eating more vegetation once fully-grown (such as Red-eared sliders).
- In captivity it is important to rotate between offering a wide variety of food types and to ensure that this wide variety of food is actually eaten.
- Fresh food should be provided daily to juveniles, and every 2-3 days to adults, ideally no more than can be consumed in 30-40 minutes. Feeding in a separate tank will help keep the water clean, but frequent handling may stress some animals, so may not be appropriate in every case.
- Supplementation is also important as many food types are deficient in essential vitamins and minerals. A vitamin and mineral powder with high calcium content is required. It is important to ensure that the phosphorous content is low. This powder can be added to pellets and mixed with a small amount of water prior to feeding (to reduce the amount which washes off) or dusted on those food items which are always consumed immediately.

SUGGESTED DIETARY ITEMS INCLUDE

Aquatic plants (freely available)
Salad material (freely available)
Green leafy vegetables (freely available)
Good quality turtle pellets (e.g. Reptomin three times per week)
Bloodworms and Tubifex worms
Rehydrated low fat cat, dog or trout pellets (fed only once-twice weekly)

Invertebrates such as crickets, morio worms or earthworms can be fed as an occasional treat as can raw whole small fish. However it is important to ensure that fish are fresh as the freezing process can destroy important vitamins.

Achieving the ideal balanced diet for your pet turtle can be challenging. For further information please see www.tortoisetrust.org and www.britishchelonigroup.org.uk or any of our exotics vets will be happy to provide further advice.