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ADDITIONAL BONUS CHAPTER

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Additional Bonus Chapter - Ongoing Care for your Turtle

If you have chosen your turtle and set-up its home the correct conditions it needs to thrive then you have taken the first step towards providing your turtle with a long and happy life. A well cared for turtle will provide you with an interesting and entertaining pet for many years. In this chapter we will look at the essential ongoing care your turtle will need.

Feeding a Healthy Diet

Just like humans, a turtle will always like certain foods more than others. However, the food it likes the most will not necessarily be the food that is best for it. A turtle needs a varied, nutritious diet to live a healthy life.

Your first step is to establish whether your turtle eats meat, vegetation, or both. The [turtles profiles](#) section of this guide will help you establish the diet your turtle needs.

If your turtle is aquatic or semi-aquatic you should always feed it in the water. Turtles are very messy eaters so in order to maintain water quality, it is recommended that you feed your turtle in a separate aquarium to its main living quarters.

Meat & Fish

Meat should never be the only part of your turtles diet, however it is a very tasty treat and helps to provide a varied diet.

You should stick to low fat meat where possible such as chicken, heart, reduced or fat-free ground beef or pork, and small fish such as shrimps, guppies and even filleted chunks of trout.



Ensure that any meat is small enough for your turtle to eat whole or easy to tear apart.

Your turtle may also enjoy water snails which you can breed in a separate aquarium and feed to your turtle for the occasional treat. Earthworms dug up from your garden can also be a tasty treat for most turtles.

Vegetation

Turtles will eat a wide range of plants which is why if you place plants within the aquarium they will often become uprooted and eaten. Some of the plants your turtle will eat include herbs such as parsley, lemon balm, and basil.

Your turtle will also eat certain vegetables such as green beans, celery, cauliflower, broccoli, sprouts and carrots. Some fruits can also be fed to turtles such as pears, apples, strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and bananas.



To establish which vegetation your turtle will eat simply try a small piece of the vegetation – if your turtle likes it will eat it and you can give it some more.

Commercial Dried Food

One way to ensure your turtle receives a balanced diet is to feed it one of the several commercial dried turtle foods that are available from your local pet store. The dried food should never make up all of your turtles diet but it can for a good base to the diet.

Depending on the size of your turtle you may need to break some of it up (especially vegetable pellets) in to smaller pieces to allow your turtle to eat it.

The advantage of commercial dried turtle food is that it usually floats on the water's surface. This means you can easily scoop out any left-over's to avoid polluting the aquarium.

Additional Dietary Supplements

There are several commercial dietary supplements available for turtles. These supplements provide minerals and trace elements that are essential for a turtles healthy growth and development.

Calcium is also very important for maintaining a healthy shell – especially when your turtle is still growing. There are various ways you can add calcium to your turtles diet:

1) Cuttlefish

A common treat for pet birds such as budgerigars, cuttlefish can also be fed to turtles to increase their calcium intake. Simply break a small part of the cuttlefish off and place it in the aquarium. Your turtle will nibble on it as and when it feels like it.

2) Ground Eggshells

Another way to add some extra calcium to the diet is to add ground eggshells amongst the normal food you feed your turtle.

Ensure that the eggshells are well ground though, any large pieces of eggshell can be sharp and cause your turtle an injury.



3) Special Pet Store Preparations

Most good pet stores stock a special preparation of calcium which can be fed easily to turtles. If you do not see anything suitable on the shelf ask a member of staff.

Note: Bananas, tomatoes and peaches are all high in phosphorus which can cause MBD (rickets) and weaken the turtles shell if consumed in large quantities. A good balance of calcium to phosphorus in a turtles diet is between 3:1 and 5:1. When feeding your turtle foods high in phosphorus you should add some calcium too to create the right balance.

Feeding the Right Amount

Young freshwater turtles will need feeding one or two times daily whereas adult turtles only need to be fed every other day. Whenever you feed a turtle you should only give it half the amount of food it can eat in one meal.

To establish how much this is you can let your turtle go without any food for two days (one day for young turtles) and then weigh or measure a good amount of its favourite food.

Feed the turtle until its first eagerness subsides and it starts to become more selective or slow in its eating. Stop feeding and work out how much it ate and then feed half of this amount in future.

To determine if you are feeding your turtle the correct amount you should weigh it regularly and record its weight on a chart. Young turtles will be growing and should become heavier in proportion to their size. Adult turtles whose growth is either very slow or complete should be maintaining their weight.

If your adult turtle loses a significant amount of weight you should increase the amount or frequency of its feeding, if it gains weight then you should reduce the amount or frequency of feeding. Excessive weight loss can also be a sign of illness, if in doubt take get it checked out by your vet.



Further Sections of this Chapter (Included in Full Guide):

Grooming Your Turtle

Caring for your Turtle Whilst on Vacation

Hibernating your Turtle Safely

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