

----- Feeding

Red-eared sliders are omnivores & eat a variety of animal & plant materials including, fish, crayfish, carrion, tadpoles, snails, crickets, wax worms, aquatic insects & numerous aquatic plant species. The captive diet for pet red-eared sliders should be a varied diet of invertebrates such as worms, aquatic or land plants, & other natural foods. Younger turtles tend to be more carnivorous (eat more animal protein) than adults do. As they grow older, they become increasingly herbivorous. Feeding your turtle outside of its home will make keeping the tank clean (and the water quality high) easier in the long run. Commercial turtle pellets can make up a good base for the diet, supplemented with a variety of other items; earthworms, crickets, waxworms, earthworms, silkworms, aquatic snails, blood worms, daphnia, shrimp, krill, mealworms. For very small turtles, prey may have to be cut into smaller pieces. A good reptile multi-vitamin with calcium & vitamin D3 should be mixed with the food a couple of times a week. Also, an excellent way to provide additional calcium is by putting a cuttlebone in the turtle tank.

Seek veterinary attention if your pet changes behavior or becomes inactive; this may indicate the pet has an illness.

As a pet owner, you are responsible for proper pet practices. Be prepared to take an ill pet to a Veterinarian & know which Veterinarian in your area can treat your pet.



check-list ✓

Your pet Red Eared Slider requires...

- Aquarium of appropriate size
- Water heater (recommended)
- UVB Light (day use)
- Land material, Rocks, logs or Bricks
- Cuttle bone (calcium supplement)
- Water Filter (Canister style)
- Food dish for fresh fruits & veg'
- Tightly sealable box for keeping 'live' food



Red Eared Sliders



• 25-33 cm (10-13 in) in length
& males 20-25 cm (8-10 in)

• Life Span: 20 years on average in captivity, although they may to 40.

----- Temperament

Red-eared sliders get their name from the distinctive red mark around their ear. The "slider" part of their name comes from their ability to slide off rocks or logs & into the water quickly. The red stripe on each side of the head distinguishes the red-eared slider from all other North American species. The carapace (top shell) is oval & flattened (especially in the male), has a weak keel that is more pronounced in the young, & the rear marginal scutes are notched. The carapace is usually a dark green background with light & dark highly variable markings. The plastron (bottom shell) is yellow with dark paired irregular markings in the center of most scutes. The plastron is highly variable in pattern. The head, legs, & tail are green with fine yellow irregular lines. The red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) is a semi-aquatic turtle belonging to the family Emydidae. Native of the southern United States, it has become common in various parts of the world due to the pet trade. Red-eared sliders are almost entirely aquatic. They do leave the water to bask in the sun & lay eggs. These reptiles are fast & are good swimmers. They hunt for prey & will attempt to capture it. They are shy & known to frantically slide off rocks & logs when approached. Most aquatic turtles, have fixed tongues with no saliva, thus they eat their food in water.

The red-eared slider is commonly kept as a pet and is often in-expensive compared to other reptiles. Red-eared sliders are the most common type of water turtle kept as pets. As with other turtles, tortoises & box turtles, individuals that survive their first year or two can be expected to live almost as long as their owners. Individuals of this species have lived at least 35 years in captivity. Red-eared sliders can be quite aggressive—especially when food is involved. If being kept as a pet, care must be taken to prevent injury or even death of smaller tankmates if you have more than one.

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Housing



Red-eared sliders are colorful, active & considered friendly & a good pet choice.

A good rule of thumb is to have 10 gallons per inch of your turtle plus 15% extra space for basking areas. For a baby you can get by with a 25-50 gallon tank for the first couple years. After that you will need a 120+ tank. They require exposure to UV light & you will need to provide both light & a basking area in the tank for them to come out of the water to 'sun' themselves. The environment can be made into a pond-like setting, complete with plants if you choose. Be aware that turtles eat many plants. You may find yourself replacing plants frequently if they find ones they like to eat. This can be good for their diet but also costly. Your Turtle's environment should include:

- **Land:** For a land mass or basking spot, flat stones & river rocks are the best choice. Logs, gravel, bricks or very coarse sand also
- **Light:** bulbs designed for reptiles that produce UVA and UVB light are needed for turtles to prevent soft shell (12 hour On/Off)
- **Decoration:** Plants, live or real add to the environment & some live aquatic plants help clean the tank water & also may be used as a food supplement.
- **Water:** A strong Canister or 'Bio' filter is recommended. Your largest investment should be in a good water filter as turtles eating habits, & waste, make keeping the water clean a challenge. Out of tank feeding, or separate feeding tanks, minimizes the amount of 'dirt' in the tank & are used by some. Also, don't leave or allow uneaten food to linger in the tank. Healthy water means healthy turtle.

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The red-eared slider enjoy large areas where they are free to swim. These turtles also require a basking area, where they can completely leave the water & enjoy the light provided for them. UVB heat lamps are usually the best option, & most common. Without this light, metabolic bone disease (soft shell syndrome) can result. Aquariums are good for young turtles, but as red eared sliders mature, their size makes housing them a bit more of a challenge as the ideal tank size for an adult would be well over 100 gallons. If you have an outdoor pond, & a securely fenced yard to keep your turtle in & predators out, you might put your turtle outdoors for at least part of the year. For the basking area, the best choice is large flat river stones, if this is at all possible. Since these turtles like to climb, gravel & logs (& bricks) also make good basking areas as well as provide areas for entertainment. Piles of rocks can be mounded (may sure they won't collapse) into an island, making tank cleaning easier. Plant life, either fake or real, also increases red-eared slider quality of life, mimicking their natural environment. The real plants can also serve as a source of food. Submerged plants like anacharis are often eaten, as are water hyacinth, water lettuce, duckweed, azolla (fairy moss), & frog-bit. Mimic a pond setting or create a floating island for them.

Maintaining good water quality is an important aspect of keeping turtles healthy. Though turtles generally aren't as sensitive to water quality issues as fish, turtle tanks should be treated much like fish tanks. A good filtration unit will be necessary to help maintain water quality, as will regular cleaning. They should have deep enough water to allow swimming. Their waste & tendency to eat in the water, create decaying particles that build up & dirty the tank. To keep the nitrates level down, you will need to do 10% water changes weekly or 20% every other week. Full tank cleanings may not be necessary. In fact, in a well maintained tank, you may not need a full tank cleaning for a couple years. Strong beefy filters are a must for turtles. You will need a canister filter (other filters such as power filters are not meant for turtles). Make sure the water is dechlorinated by leaving a container of water out at least 24 hours. In addition, appropriate water & ambient temperatures should be maintained. Reptiles do not hibernate but actually brumate, becoming less active but occasionally rising for food or water. To prevent attempted brumation in an aquarium, lights should be on for 12-14 hours per day & the water temperature should be maintained between 24-27 °C (75-81 °F). Water temperatures must be under 13 °C (55 °F) in order for aquatic turtles to brumate properly.

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