



ANIMAL CARE SHEET



Ornate Box Turtle

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Terrapene ornata ornata

ADULT SIZE

Up to 4" - 5"

TEMPERATURE RANGE (°F)

Daytime Air Temperature: 70 - 90°

Basking Temperature: 80 - 90°

Humidity: 30 - 60%

DIET

Hatchling and juvenile ornate box turtles are highly carnivorous. Preferred live foods include worms, snails, slugs, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, and grubs. Ornate box turtles, even as adults, are slightly more carnivorous than other box turtles. As they get older, ornates will eat plants and fruits.

RECOMMENDED ENCLOSURE

50 gallon Rubbermaid plastic tub for an adult so that you can provide the microenvironments your box turtle needs. Substrate can be one or a combination of several things: top soil, cypress mulch, peat moss, sphagnum moss, and bed-a-beast, and it should be several inches deep. You'll need to supply lighting and heat indoors. Turtles need UVA and UVB light. Fluorescent tubes such as the Reptisun 5.0 provide UVA et B; ceramic heat emitters provide heat; mercury vapor bulbs supply both uv and heat. One end of the tub should be warm—the basking end— and the other end should be cooler. For adults, the cool end can be room temperature, assuming you don't keep your house below 70 degrees in the winter. Provide the same types of hides, a water dish, and interesting "furniture" indoors that you do outdoors. A portion of the substrate should be kept moist, but not extremely wet, so that the turtle can bury itself in a moist microenvironment when it needs to.

CAPTIVE DIET

Ornate box turtles are more carnivorous than other box turtles. These guys evolved on the plains and one of their preferred food sources was beetles and grubs in bison dung. In captivity, the most common live foods used are crickets, superworms, red wigglers, earthworms, mealworms, wax worms, silkworms, and even pinky mice. Mealworms and wax worms are not recommended as a staple because the mealworms are harder to digest and wax worms have a lot of fat. Silkworms are good because they're fed on mulberry leaves, which are high in calcium. All insects should be gut loaded with a high calcium food source and dusted with calcium powder before feeding. You can also wet the insects in some baby squash (the kind in jars sold for human babies!), then roll the insect in calcium powder. I use that technique when I need to get more Vitamin A into the turtle.

Ornates will also eat flowers, greens, fruit, carrots, and squash when offered as part of a salad. To entice them to eat the salad, you may need to sprinkle a few worms on top or mix in some moistened Mazuri or RepCal pellets.

Foods to avoid include corn, spinach, broccoli Brussels sprouts, cabbage, beans, peas, and cauliflower because they interfere with the body's utilization of calcium. Box turtles love corn, for example, but it really isn't good for them.

