

Diamondback Terrapins

<u>Average Adult Size</u>	Male; 4-5.5 inches Female; 6-9 inches
<u>Average Life Span with proper care</u>	25 to 40 years;
<u>Diet</u>	Carnivore

Enclosure

Water

Clean, filtered, and aerated water with a neutral to slightly acidic pH.

Water temperature of 76-78° F and the optimal pH for captive Diamondback Terrapins seems to be in the 6.8 to 7.0 range.

Good water quality, provided by proper filtration, is imperative to the well-being of Diamondback Terrapins. If kept in poor water conditions with a sub-optimal diet, Diamondback Terrapins will often show a range of shell problems including "warping", soft shell disease, and fungal infections. In extreme cases, they will often die.

Turtle wastes and uneaten food will cause the water to become acidic, which will leave your pets open to attack by various fungi and bacteria.

Turtles are messy feeders and very hard on water quality. Unless the enclosure can be emptied and cleaned several times weekly, a powerful submersible turtle filter or canister filter will be necessary. Even with filtration, partial water changes are essential. Diamondback Terrapins are best kept in bare-bottomed aquariums. Gravel traps wastes, which greatly complicates cleaning.

Basking/Lighting

Give them plenty of basking areas with hot spots of 90° F.

Basking is an important part of a Diamondback Terrapin's daily routine and sturdy basking sites should be available to babies, juveniles, and adults.

A source of UVB radiation is essential.

If a fluorescent bulb is used, be sure that the turtle can bask within 6-12 inches of it. Mercury vapor bulbs broadcast UVB over greater distances, and also provide beneficial UVA radiation.

Diet

Live

Fish, frozen crayfish or shrimp, and earthworms

As carnivores most Diamondback Terrapins will readily accept any number of commercial turtle diets. We suggest a mixture of three or four different high-quality types. Freeze-dried krill or brine shrimp can also provide a great treat for these turtles.

Commercial

Most individuals will also accept commercial turtle pellets and trout chow, which can comprise 40-50% of the diet.

Calcium Supplement to Supply Beak-Trimming Exercise

A cuttlebone or turtle mineral block should be available

Without sufficient exercise, your terrapin's jaws will quickly become over-grown. Shells, exoskeletons and bones also supply calcium, which is needed in great quantities by this dietary specialist.

Temperament

Responsive Pets

Most feed readily from the hand, and adapt well to busy households. However, all turtles are capable of administering powerful bites and scratches when frightened, and must be handled with care...this is especially true of a large species that can crush snail and clam shells!

First Aid

Infection Prevention

Once a month it can be very helpful to place the Terrapin in brackish water. Simply add about one tablespoon of sea salt per gallon of water in enclosure. After one week switch them back to fresh water. This can help prevent bacterial infections and promote healing small wounds.

Foot Injury

Disinfecting the injury

Before bed use a simple rubbing alcohol diluted in filtered water with a 30:70 ratio administered by a q tip

Follow with covering the injury with antibiotic ointment (without pain relief) such as Neosporin

Dry Docking

Place turtle into a dry container. The sides of the container also need to be tall enough to prevent the turtle climbing out. I use black plastic buckets.

Place a dry towel in the bottom, to absorb water from the turtle and keep humidity down. In plastic containers, this also gives the turtle better grip underfoot, which also helps them feel secure.