



# Jungle Bob's Care Sheet

Red-Eared Sliders  
(*Pseudemys scripta elegans*)

## **General Information**

Although the hardy Red-Eared Slider makes a wonderfully responsive pet, its size and potential lifespan (to 40+ years) can be a bit much for some owners. They are one of the most improperly cared for reptiles in the pet industry, and at least 99% of the ones that we “sell” here are actually adoptions. They are often purchased as quarter sized babies that are adorable (technically illegal to sell under 4”) and incredibly inexpensive, but most sellers will not inform you of the commitment you are about to make by buying one. Please read the following information carefully and think twice (maybe even 3 times) before purchasing a pet turtle.

The Red-Eared Slider's native range includes much of central and southern North America, from West Virginia to New Mexico, Florida and central Mexico, and north along the Mississippi River to Nebraska. Introduced populations live in most US states and in over 40 other countries. Sliders may be found in swamps, lakes, streams, tidal creeks, park ponds, polluted urban rivers, and numerous other habitats.

Red-Eared Sliders have a red or orange stripe behind the eye and a carapace clad in olive to olive-brown (bright green in hatchlings). The carapace and greenish skin are marked with yellow stripes, and the yellow plastron is blotched with black. Females reach 8-12 inches in length, while males top out at 5 inches.

## **Housing**

There is no such thing as a tank that is “too big” for a Red-Eared Slider. A 75 gallon or larger aquarium will be needed for an adult. Babies can start off in 20 gallon long (30x12) terrariums. Red-Eared Sliders are best kept in bare-bottomed aquariums, as gravel complicates cleaning, and may be swallowed. Red-Eared Sliders need a dry surface on which to rest and bask. The temperature in the basking area should be 90-95 degrees). Commercial turtle docks, stone platforms, and cork bark flats work well. Powerful filters and regular partial water changes are essential.

## **Heat/Lighting**

Sliders require 8-12 hours per day of UVB light, which enables them to produce vitamin D3. Vitamin D3 metabolizes the calcium in their diet. Calcium is needed for proper bone development. Inadequate UVB exposure and calcium intake will result in a crippling and often fatal condition known as Metabolic Bone Disease. Also, it is very important to change your UVB bulb every 6-8 months, as after this time it stops producing adequate UVB.

A water temperature of 70-75 F and a basking site of about 90 F should be maintained. As adults may break typical aquarium heaters, it's best to choose a model designed for use with turtles, or to protect the heater with PVC pipe or decorative Heater Cover.

## **Diet**

A high quality commercial turtle chow (we prefer Reptomin turtle sticks) can make up most of their diet, and earthworms and other insects may be used to add variety. High quality vegetables such as Collard, Dandelion, Turnip, and Mustard Greens can also be offered. A turtle calcium block should also be available.

## **Cleaning and Handling**

Leftover food should be removed from the aquarium daily, and weekly partial water changes are essential. The filter media should be replaced as directed by the manufacturer.

Red-eared sliders are very responsive to their owners, rushing over for food when one enters the room, but usually bite or struggle if picked up. Due to their environment being mostly aquatic, no matter how clean the water may look, there is always at least a trace amount of urine and/or feces in the water, so always wash your hands before and after handling any animal and keep them away from your mouth and face.

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