

Red-Eared

Trachemys scripta elegans

Adult Size	Males range from 6 to 9 inches long while females range from 9 to 12 inches.	Life Span	20 to 40 years with proper care.
Male/Female Differences	Females are larger and have a smaller tail. Males have longer, thicker tails and longer front claws with the cloaca closer to the tip of the tail.		
Compatibility	Interacting with red-eared sliders and socialization are important in the development of a young turtle to eliminate behavioral problems later. These turtles are best kept alone because of the space, water quality issues, and aggression. If cohabitation is preferred make sure they have a large aquarium (75 gallons for two 5 inch turtles), a powerful internal and biological filter, appropriate lighting, and that both turtles of equal size.		
Origin	Southern United States.		
Climate	Ponds, lakes, marshes, creeks, and streams.		
Day Cycle	Diurnal (awake during the day)		
Temperature	The proper temperature allows the turtle to regulate body temperature. As such the water temperature should be of 76-80°F, while their basking area should be 86-90°F.		
Lighting	Appropriate lighting is important since wild red-eared sliders enjoy the full power of the sun; their captive habitat must attempt to replicate their natural environment as much as possible. The lighting should provide three things – UVB, UVA, and heat. UVB rays help the turtle by providing D3, a vitamin which allows for the metabolization and absorption of calcium. Heat and UVA rays help regulate the turtle's feeding, activity, and mating. Lighting should be on for 10-12 hours a day with an emphasis on a consistent day/night cycle. Heat can also be provided with a submersible heater; make sure it is shatterproof since turtles tend to break them.		

Humidity	Moderate; lightly mist the tank every couple of days to simulate rain.
Habitat/Territory	Red-eared sliders reside in areas with calm, fresh, and warm waters
Substrate/Bedding	River rocks, sand or no substrate, all make good choices for the aquatic part of the habitat. Small aquarium gravel poses a health risk as the turtle could easily mistake it for food and an impaction could occur. 70% of the habitat should consist of water and the rest should comprise of land. The water level should be no deeper than the total length of the turtle. For example, if the turtle is six inches, the maximum height of the water level is also six inches. Make sure the turtle can gain access to the land by using rocks that are not steep, like slate. Wood chips, river rocks, and sand are all good choices for the terrestrial area.
Hiding Place/Den	Non-toxic hiding places will provide a spot where the turtle can retreat to if they feel threatened or uncomfortable. This is especially important for younger turtles that may not always want attention.
Cage Type	Aquariums, plastic storage containers, and ponds all make excellent habitats. Since red-eared sliders can grow up to a foot, buy the biggest enclosure possible. A 36" x 13" enclosure is a good size to start with, and should house the turtle adequately for the next three years, but a fully-grown turtle should live in something no smaller than a 48" x 18" enclosure. Make sure the area is escape-proof.
Diet	A varied and balanced diet is important for the long-term health of the turtle. Simply put, an exclusive diet of commercial pellets will not meet the turtle's dietary needs and may cause deficiencies, disorders, or even premature death. Their captive diet should be close match their natural diet which can include earthworms, small fish, shrimp, dandelion leaves, anacharis, duckweed, etc. Young turtles (1-5 years) should have a 60-40% ratio of protein and vegetable matter. Older turtles should have a 25-75% ratio of protein and vegetable matter.
Supplements	Calcium and phosphorus supplements are recommended since red-eared sliders often suffer from shell and bone inadequacies and the phosphorus will help to control their metabolism. Since these supplements are usually in powder form, simply sprinkle over their food.
Diet Precautions	Excess amount of protein in young turtles cause rapid, unhealthy growth that could lead to permanent shell deformity. Avoid a uniform diet. Inadequate amounts of calcium and phosphorus are also issues with feeding the same foods.
Feeding	Small amounts of vegetables and plants should be offered every day while the protein part of their diet - be it pellets, feeder fish, or worms – should

	be given every other day. Be careful not to overfeed.
Water Source	Red-eared sliders drink and absorb water while they swim so it is vital that a high water quality is maintained. 50% percent water changes should be performed every three days.
Grooming	Make sure the turtle is spending enough time out of the water because most illnesses aquatic turtles are prone to are due to their lack of drying off on land. Red-eared sliders should spend at least six hours on land daily.
Oral and Foot Care	The turtle's nails may need to be clipped every couple of months depending on the level of their activity. Use cat safe nail clippers.
Proper Handling	Pick them up with both hands and make sure to support their body. Be careful to keep your fingers away from its face as it may mistake them for worms. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling a turtle with antibacterial soap.
Habitat Maintenance	Healthy turtles will relieve themselves a lot, so cleaning their habitat is very important. Turtles tend to defecate right after they eat, so it is advised to feed them in a small container filled with water. Large water changes should be done every three days to maintain clean water. The terrestrial part of the habitat should be cleaned out and replaced every week.
Health Concerns	Red-eared sliders are prone to metabolic bone disease/soft shell (MBD), dystocia (egg binding), shell rot, respiratory infections, fungal infections, ear infections, accidental drowning and obesity. MBD is a serious, but preventable condition brought on about by lack of calcium or vitamin D3. Appropriate UVB lighting and a differentiated diet will help counteract this disease. Dystocia affects female turtles when eggs are abnormally held within the body. Constructing a nesting area (consisting of moist soil, leaves, and sand) and meeting their calcium needs should prevent this anomaly. Shell rot develops when an injury to the shell becomes infected because of the turtle spending too much time within the water. Symptoms are discoloration, exposed tissue, and softening of the shell. Keeping the aquarium clean, antibiotics, and a lot of rest will help remedy this ailment. Improper temperatures cause respiratory infections, which may become fatal. Irregular swimming, breathing difficulties, and lethargy are all symptoms of infection. Consult your veterinarian immediately. Ear infections are caused by the poor water quality and the symptoms are erratic swimming and a swollen head. Consult your veterinarian immediately as he/she will need to prescribe antibiotics. Poor water quality and insufficient UVB lighting cause fungal infections.

Cleaning the water, soaking the turtle in saltwater, and using sulfa blocks should help clear up the fungus. Aquatic turtles frequently drown by accidentally wedging themselves between the terrestrial part of the habitat. Lowering the water level and making sure the land mass is situated underneath rocks or bricks that are impenetrable, that is the turtle cannot jam itself between them. The causes for obesity are obvious, not enough exercise and bad nutrition. Feed less, focusing more on vegetables and make sure the turtle gets a decent amount of activity, be it by buying a bigger enclosure or letting them play outside under close supervision
