



Do you need a helping hand or advice?

Email your queries to prk.ed@kelsey.co.uk or write to the address on page 66.

A selection of submitted questions will appear here every month, and a prize of Vetark products will be awarded to the writer of the Star Question. Regrettably, replies can only be given through this column, and if you are worried about the health of your animal, seek veterinary advice without delay.

STAR QUESTION



Turtle tank set-up & lighting

Q I am planning to use one of Arcadia's D3 tubes for my young musk turtles. Can you please tell me which would be the best tube to use - either the D3 or the D3+ tube? The water depth is around 30cm (12in) and the musk turtles stay mostly down at the bottom. I need to know which tube would give enough UVB through the water to benefit my turtles. Have you any care information that you can give me too, please?

A The musk turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*) is probably one of the best choices as a pet turtle. Its compact size and ease of care make it the perfect subject for life in the home aqua-terrarium. An adult musk will rarely grow bigger than 10cm (4in) in terms of its shell length, and these turtles are not generally aggressive by nature. They are also known as stinkpot turtles because of their ability to emit a distinctive musky odour when they feel threatened, although they soon grow out of this habit once they are used to being handled.

Baby musk turtles are frequently seen in

aquatic and reptile outlets all over the country and have a really cute appearance, with hatchlings being around the size of a 20p piece. They require a very varied diet including small crustaceans and invertebrates - not forgetting plant life. I personally think that including vegetation in the set-up is essential for this species.

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Youngsters will readily eat oxygenating aquarium plants and I have used the new Tetra Fresh Delica Bloodworm pouches very successfully with them. Live bloodworm and small river shrimp are eagerly chased and consumed as well. If a small group of these turtles are housed together, I have even seen them work as a team to drive river shrimp into

a corner of the tank so that they can catch and consume these crustaceans more easily. Proprietary frozen foods are useful as well, being thawed in advance, and JBL make some awesome dry turtle foods.

Basking habits

It has been thought that musk turtles are nocturnal; again I cannot agree with this. They may be more active and feed more hungrily at lower light levels but every healthy individual that I have encountered has been active during the day. These turtles do not seem to leave the water readily though, in order to bask on dry land, but they do spend long periods floating at the surface. Their habit of feeding when light levels are low may simply be a means of avoiding predators.

I suggest that when using a turtle-safe water heater set to around 21-24°C (70-75°F), a heat spot is not required for this species if the water is heated. A dry area should still be provided though, just in case your turtles do decide to leave the water.

With regard to lighting, since musk turtles

Nutrobal, Arkvits & Calci-Dust
- essential support for reptiles



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