

Turtles



Did you know that turtles and tortoises have been on the earth for more than 200 million years? That means the distant relative of that cute little shelled reptile you're considering adding to your family walked the earth at the very same time as dinosaurs! Along with their interesting history, turtles and tortoises have excellent eyesight and a keen sense of smell. They're fun to care for and fascinating to watch, making them popular pets for families and hobbyists alike.

Choosing the Right Turtle or Tortoise For You

Now that you've decided to add a turtle or tortoise to your family, your next step is figure out which species is the right one for you. There are several different types of turtles and tortoises and each has its own set of unique needs including dietary. To help you select the right one, Dr. Robyn Jaynes, PetSmart vet expert, offers the following advice: "It's important to remember that the little turtle or tortoise you're bringing home could grow up into a large turtle or tortoise. Research the different types, taking special note of their expected adult size and the amount of care required to keep them healthy. Then choose the one that best fits your experience level and lifestyle."

Turtles and tortoises: What's the difference?

While both turtles and tortoises are reptiles, have scales and are cold-blooded, the main difference between the two is their habitat and diet. Most turtles spend much of their time in the water, tend to have webbed feet and are omnivores. Tortoises are land-dwellers, have round, stumpy feet like an elephant's and are herbivores.

Which species is right for you?

PetSmart offers several different types of turtles and tortoises. Contact your local PetSmart to find out which ones they carry.

At a glance: What you'll need for your turtle

- Turtles need a large home (a 29-gallon or larger glass aquarium with a screen top) with proper lighting/heating for basking and aquatic requirements including filtration to help keep the habitat clean.
- Turtles need a varied diet including live, prepared and fresh foods.
- Turtles require proper veterinary care.

At a glance: What you'll need for your tortoise

- Tortoises need a 40-gallon or larger glass terrarium with a screen top for ventilation, proper heating and lighting, substrate to line the bottom of the terrarium, artificial or natural rock or wood for a hiding area, a dish for food and a water dish for drinking/soaking their shells.
- Tortoises need a temperate, moderately humid or arid environment depending on the species. To help measure the habitat's temperature, you'll need at least two thermometers to gauge temperature at both ends of the habitat and a hygrometer to measure humidity levels.
- Tortoises require a varied diet that consists of fresh vegetables, a little fruit and prepared foods.
- Tortoises require proper veterinary care.

Welcoming home your new turtle or tortoise

- Ideally, you'll want to have the habitat ready and running before you bring your new turtle or tortoise home so you can troubleshoot any problems like with filtration in your turtle tank or temperature in your tortoise habitat, etc. Being prepared can help reduce stress on your pet and help him adapt to his new environment more quickly.
- Always supervise children when they're interacting with your turtle or tortoise.
- Turtles and tortoises should be handled only when necessary – frequent handling of turtles or tortoises can be stressful for them. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling your turtle or tortoise to prevent the transfer of certain types of bacteria including salmonella.