

Feeding North American Box Turtles

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INGREDIENTS

1. Commercial Pelletized Chow (~1 TBSP per turtle)

- “Omega One Adult Turtle Sticks” — available online and in some pet stores, including Petco but not PetSmart.

OR

- Nasco Turtle Brittle (now labeled “Frog Brittle” by manufacturer) – available at www.enasco.com; not sold in stores.

2. Vegetables (~ 1/2 TBSP per turtle)

- Pumpkin
- Butternut Squash
- Winter or Summer Squash (use only infrequently; not enough beta-carotene)
- DO NOT feed broccoli or cauliflower

3. Leafy Greens (select one or combine; use ~ 2 square inches per turtle)

- Redhead lettuce
- Romaine
- Dandelions
- mixed baby lettuce
- Endive
- **DO NOT feed spring mix, chard, spinach, kale, cabbage**
(these are bad for your turtle)

4. Apple (about a crouton’s worth as flavoring)

5. Berries/Fruits (select one or combine and vary over time; serve a big “crouton’s worth” per turtle;

- blackberries
- raspberries
- cantaloupe
- papaya
- mango (occasionally only)
- opuntia (“nopales” or “spineless cactus”) fruit

6. Supplements (Your turtle needs BOTH supplements)

- Rep-Cal brand “Herptivite Multivitamins” **AND** Rep-Cal brand “Calcium with Vit D3”

DIET PREPARATION (Please follow these directions closely)

1. Mix about **3 parts** (by volume) dry chow with **1 part** tap water. (Example: 1 level **Tablespoon** chow with 1 **teaspoon** water). Cover and let sit 20 minutes; use FLAT-BOTTOMED container so all chow is in contact with water. The end result should be soft and fluffy, not mushy or hard.
2. Peel skin off hard squashes (butternut squash, pumpkin); leave skin on summer/winter squash. Then cut up into little crouton-size chunks.
3. Microwave squash in closed container until slightly soft (1 cup takes about 2 minutes on high) – you don’t want it hard or mushy.

4. Dice squash finely into *very tiny* pieces (to save time, pulse grind in food processor).
5. Dice lettuce and apple into parsley-flake size pieces (to save time, pulse grind in food processor).
6. Hand combine diced squash and lettuce/apple mix.
7. Put about 3/4 heaping tablespoon of #6 on a heaping tablespoon of moist chow for each turtle.
8. Add about 3-4 berries or one piece of fruit (crouton size) for each turtle.
9. Lightly dust the meal with a supplement – **alternate** between the multi-vitamin supplement and the calcium supplement at each meal (i.e., first meal *vitamin*, second meal *calcium*, third meal *vitamin*, etc.). Note – a little is good, a lot is not. Use a tea strainer, lightly tapped, to sprinkle the supplement all over the diet, as if you were adding a little powdered sugar to a cupcake. That way every bite includes some supplement!!
- 10. Feed every turtle its own dish separated some distance from any other turtle. Turtles do NOT share food well!!**

How often should I feed my box turtle?

Feed turtles every two days. When turtles are fed daily, they are more likely to be picky.

What about “bugs”?

It’s great to supplement the turtle’s diet with earthworms, roly pollies, snails, and slugs. However, do not feed them mealworms, super mealies, or waxworms very often if at all. Turtles love them, but if they eat too many they will give your turtle metabolic bone disease (osteoporosis).

What about cuttlebone?

If you have young growing turtles, give them cuttlebone (just put it in their habitat) to help their bones grow strong. Leave the cuttlebone in their habitat all the time. Adult turtles usually don’t like cuttlebones but it never hurts to offer them. NOTE: *Cuttlebones add extra calcium to the diet but are not a substitute for powdered phosphorus-free calcium supplement designed for reptiles.*

Step 5 - note that pieces are tiny, but distinct. Don’t create a puree.



Step 6 - don’t use a blender for this. Combine by hand.



Step 9 - using a tea strainer lets you distribute supplement over entire meal.