

Florida Red-Bellied Turtle Care Sheet

(*Pseudemys nelsoni*)

Quick Facts

- **Size:** Males 8-10 inches; females 10-14 inches.
- **Lifespan:** 25-40+ years with proper care.
- **Temperament:** Generally peaceful; can co-exist with other turtles of similar size and temperament.
- **Activity Level:** Highly active swimmers and frequent baskers.
- **Diet:** Primarily herbivorous as adults, but juveniles require more protein.



Overview:

The Eastern Painted Turtle is a small to medium-sized freshwater turtle, known for its striking coloration and outgoing personality. These turtles are native to the eastern United States and are popular pets due to their vibrant red, yellow, and black markings. They are hardy and active, making them suitable for beginners and experienced keepers alike.

Habitat Requirements

Tank Setup

- **Tank Size:** Minimum of 40 gallons for one adult; 75+ gallons for multiple turtles.
- **Water Depth:** 8-12 inches for juveniles, deeper for adults (12-18 inches); ensure easy access to the surface.
- **Substrate:** Smooth river stones, sand, or bare-bottomed tanks for easy cleaning.
- **Basking Area:** Provide a stable dock, rocks, or driftwood for basking under heat.

Water Quality

- **Filtration:** A high-quality canister or submersible filter to maintain water cleanliness.
- **Temperature:** Water temperature should be 72-78°F for adults, 78-80°F for juveniles.
- **pH Level:** Neutral to slightly alkaline (6.5-7.5).
- **Cleaning:** Perform 25-50% water changes weekly to maintain excellent water quality.



Lighting and Heating

- **UVB Lighting:** Essential for shell and bone health; provide 10-12 hours daily with a UVB bulb.
- **Basking Spot Temperature:** Maintain 85-90°F under a heat lamp.
- **Ambient Temperature:** 75-80°F during the day, 70-75°F at night.

Diet and Feeding

- **Protein Sources:** Insects, worms, shrimp, and high-quality turtle pellets.
- **Vegetation:** Dark leafy greens (collard greens, dandelion greens, romaine lettuce) and aquatic plants like water hyacinth and duckweed.
- **Fruits (Occasional Treats):** Small amounts of berries, melon, or apples.
- **Feeding Frequency:** Juveniles eat daily; adults eat every 2-3 days.
- **Calcium Supplementation:** Dust food with calcium powder (with or without vitamin D3) once or twice a week.

Handling and Behavior

- **Handling:** Handle sparingly to avoid stress. Always support the turtle's body securely.
- **Behavior:** Florida Red-Bellied Turtles are active and curious. They often bask in groups and may beg for food when they recognize their keepers.

Health and Maintenance

- **Common Health Issues:** Shell rot, respiratory infections, and vitamin deficiencies.
- **Signs of Illness:** Lethargy, wheezing, swollen eyes, or changes in appetite. Consult a reptile veterinarian if symptoms occur.
- **Shell Maintenance:** Provide UVB lighting and a balanced diet to support healthy shell growth.

Fun Facts

1. Florida Red-Bellied Turtles often lay their eggs in alligator nests in the wild, using the gator's protection to keep predators away.
2. They are strong swimmers and enjoy exploring large aquatic environments.
3. Their vibrant red or orange plastron gives them their striking name.

By providing proper care, your Florida Red-Bellied Turtle will thrive and become a long-lived, active addition to your collection!