



## CARE SHEET

### Loggerhead Musk Turtle *Sternotherous minor minor*



The Loggerhead Musk Turtle (*sternotherous minor minor*) is a American species of Musk Turtle from North Florida and some parts of Georgia. They are small turtles, reaching sizes of 4 to 5.5 inches, the measurement is the carapace length (back shell) as measured in a straight line (not curved over the apex of the carapace). This species has an unusually large head compared to their body, hence the name.

### Housing

*S. M. Minor* are an aquatic species of turtle but poor swimmer, preferring to walk on the bottom, or climb plants. In a captive habitat they should be provided with water around 2 - 3 times the depth that they are long and with a floor plan 4 x their length x 2 length. An adult therefore, could easily need water 24 x 12 x 12 inches as a minimum.

Although not a highly basking species of turtle an area is required so that the animals can rest and dry off completely. They also use this area to regulate their temperature and UV light absorption. A basking area can be a floating item like bark, or a commercially purchased turtle ramp when young, but adults need a basking area which they cannot sink. I prefer to build an above tank basking area which is fixed with a ramp. This prevents movement or sinking and means I can regulate the basking spot in terms of lighting and heat.

Plenty of real or fake plants should be provided to allow the animals to exhibit natural hiding or resting behaviour. Note they may try to eat the plants, so plastic plants should be sturdy. Sheer tank sides with no climbing opportunity can cause this species to drown

Many keepers like to provide a substrate on the bottom of the tank. Substrate is not required and a tank without it will stay cleaner more easily. Gravel SHOULD NOT be used as the turtles often swallow it in search of food and are unable to pass it, resulting in gut impaction which can be fatal. I recommend play sand marketed for children's sand pits. This will allow natural foraging behaviour and purchase on the bottom of the tank. Make sure it is very well rinsed beforehand to remove all dust and fine particles.



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Written by Dudley Pinson ©The Turtle Emporium 2020

## Heat and light

Water temperature should be in the range of 23 - 27°C.

UVB and UVA (heat) are both required to maintain correct internal temperatures and synthesis of vitamin D3 and calcium. UVB can be achieved using screw in bulb type UVB lamps or the longer T8 tubes. A UVB of 5% (5.0) – to 10% (10.0) should be provided. Replace UVB bulbs at least every 12 months. A ceramic heat emitter or normal basking bulb can provide UVA and heat. Wattage depends on distance from basking area. The basking area should be 30-35°C under the heat lamp. Avoid coloured bulbs and use only those closest to the natural spectrum. The lights should be set to a timer to provide 10-12 hours of light per day during natural hours.

## Filtration



Turtles are dirty animals and leave a lot of waste by leftover food and faecal matter. They need filtration 3 x more powerful than what is recommended for fish in the same volume water. All commercially purchased filters will have a rating based on fish, so make sure you bear this in mind. Young *sternotherous minor* lack the strength to swim in a strong current, so a weaker flow should be used at this age. Adults will need a decent sized external canister filter.

## Diet

*Sternotherous minor minor* are a carnivorous species, eating live food and other protein items and pellets, in the wild they would eat shellfish, molluscs and snails, hence the large strong jaws. This can be supplemented with red and green lettuce (not spinach or iceberg) remember to remove anything uneaten. Variation is key and a piece of cuttlebone should be provided at all times for calcium and to keep the beak trim.

This guide is meant to be a quick reference/starter guide and does not replace more in-depth research on this species. Always ensure that you know the correct care needs for your animal.

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