

Policy: SC-36-400
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ILAR
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Title: Husbandry Care of Turtles

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for turtles.

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for turtles must meet or exceed these minimum requirements based on the ILAR Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (*Guide*). Deviations or exceptions must be approved by the Attending Veterinarian and the IACUC.

III. Procedure:

Daily (365 days a year without exception):

- Observe each animal and check for health concerns (*Guide* pg. 112).
- Ensure adequate potable water is available (*Guide* pg. 65-68, 85).
- Ensure adequate feed is available, as applicable by species and life stage (*Guide* pg. 65-68, 84-85).
- Record sick and dead animals, and report them to Campus Veterinary Services (CVS) or designated clinical veterinarian per standard operating procedure
- Record minimum and maximum temperatures and humidity.
 - Temperature range for turtles is species-dependent.
 - Humidity range for turtles is species-dependent.
- Spot clean and change any excessively soiled or flooded cages or tanks (*Guide* pg. 70, 86).
- Clean and organize room, anterooms, and surrounding premises (*Guide* pg. 72, 86-87).
- Record daily completion of each task, initial each task, and date the log.

As needed:

- Clean and disinfect primary enclosure (*Guide* pg. 69-71, 86).
 - The use of certain disinfectants may be contraindicated for some aquatic and semi-aquatic species, as residues may be highly deleterious (*Guide* pg. 71, 86).
- Disinfect the animal room including walls, floors, and ceilings (*Guide* pg. 72, 86).

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- Remove and replace worn or damaged equipment from primary enclosures and surrounding facility (*Guide* pg. 72, 86).
- Clean and sanitize feed storage containers (*Guide* pg. 67).
- For aquatic and semi-aquatic species, perform partial water changes to remove excess nitrogenous waste and debris. The frequency of cleaning and disinfection should be determined by water quality (*Guide* pg. 86).
- Each facility will develop their own best practices with sanitization of the
- Macroenvironment typically occurring every 6 months or whenever there is a change in species but may vary with facility.

Environmental Enrichment:

- Refer to the Environmental Enrichment policy ([SOC-30-102](#)).

Facilities:

- Temperature alarms must be installed in all rooms housing turtles (*Guide* pg. 143).
- Adequate ventilation must be provided for the health and comfort of the animal at all times.
 - A minimum of 10-15 fresh room air exchanges per hour shall be provided in animal housing areas (*Guide* pg. 46).
 - Direct exposure of animals to air moving at high velocity (drafts) should be avoided as the speed of air to which animals are exposed affects the rate at which heat and moisture are removed from an animal, which can be particularly problematic for semi-aquatic species that can desiccate (*Guide* pg. 46).
 - For aquatic species, room air exchange rates are governed by thermal and moisture loads (i.e. to minimize condensation that can affect visibility for daily health checks) (*Guide* pg. 80-81, 150-151)
- Floors shall be moisture-resistant, non-absorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth (*Guide* pg. 137, 150). Refer to Physical Plant SOC 50-102.
- All outlets near areas with water should be rated GFCI (ground faulted conductance interrupted). (*Guide* p.150).
- Electrical components should be placed away from water and wet surfaces.
- Facilities housing certain turtle species must follow the conditions specified in the University of California, Davis' California Department of Fish and Wildlife Permit (#537) to import, transport, and possess Restricted Species for Research. A copy of this permit must be posted on the animal room door.

Housing:

- Floor space taken up by food bowls, water containers, and enrichment devices should not be considered part of the floor space (*Guide* pg. 56).
- Animals must have enough space to express their natural postures and postural adjustments without touching the enclosure walls or ceiling, be able to turn around, and have ready access to food and water. In addition, there must be sufficient space to comfortably rest away from areas soiled by urine and feces (*Guide* pg. 56).