

MUSK TURTLE

(*Sternotherus Odoratus*)

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FAST FACTS

- Found along the eastern United States
- Can live over 50 years.
- Average size of 3-5 inches
- Nocturnal creatures, do not bask often
- Relatively weak swimmers
- Can release a strong odor when threatened

SMALL TURTLES FROM SHALLOW WATERS

The musk turtle, sometimes known as the eastern musk turtle or by their endearing nickname “stinkpot,” is a popular pet thanks to their relatively small size. These little creatures rarely grow to more than 5.5 inches long and are one of the smallest species of aquatic turtles.

Musk turtles are intriguing and unique turtles that get their name (and nickname) from the strong odor they can emit to deter predators. They are known for being quite feisty and require some extra care so as to avoid them feeling threatened and releasing their musk. At the same time, this unique personality makes them an entertaining and fascinating companion that can be in your life for up to (and over) 50 years in the right conditions.



NATIVE HABITAT

Musk turtles are native to eastern North America. They are nocturnal creatures and although they are aquatic turtles, they are most likely to be found in shallow waters due to their relatively weak swimming ability.



FEEDING AND DIET

A varied and balanced diet is crucial to ensure the health and longevity of your common musk turtle. They are primarily carnivorous and should be fed high-protein foods like earthworms, crickets, fish, and shrimp, and occasional leafy greens. They can also be fed turtle pellets such as [Zilla® Turtle Sticks](#), as well as treats they'll love like [Zilla® River Shrimp](#) or [Turtle Chasers](#).

Check the [Zilla® Feeding Guide](#) for a list of appropriate food options.



RECOMMENDED HOUSING AND ACCESSORIES

Proper housing is crucial for the health and well-being of musk turtles, providing them with an environment that mimics their natural habitat. At minimum, you'll want a 30-gallon tank for one turtle. The [Aqueon® Standard Glass Terrarium](#) is a great option that comes in multiple sizes.

Because musk turtles are not strong swimmers, the water in your habitat should be shallow enough for the turtle to reach the surface without constant paddling. Use a strong filter system suitable for shallow water and clean the tank regularly, using [dechlorinated water](#). Water care products like [Zilla® Miracle Ball™](#) and [Zilla® PURE](#) can help significantly reduce time spent on upkeep.

Turtles need to bask in order to warm up and regulate their metabolism. While musk turtles do not bask as often as other turtles, it is still beneficial to provide a dry basking area for them. You can use accessories like the [Zilla® Freestanding Floating Basking Platform](#) or [Zilla® Basking Platform Ramp](#).



TEMPERATURE AND LIGHTING

Providing the right temperature and lighting is essential to keep your musk turtle healthy and active. Aim to maintain your water temperature at 80°F and a warmer basking area around 90°F. Traditional reptile heat bulbs such as [Zilla® Incandescent Spot Bulbs](#) or [Zilla® Mini Halogen Bulbs](#) are great, as well as heat emitters like the [Zilla® Aquatic Reptile Heater](#) to help with consistent overall warmth.

UVA and UVB is a necessity for a healthy turtle. Indoor turtles require UVB lighting and supplemental heat lights for 10-12 hours a day. Make sure to provide access to UVA/UVB using any [Zilla® Fluorescent UVA/UVB bulb](#). These can be fitted to a corresponding fixture such as the [Zilla® Heat & UVB Basking Fixture](#). Remember to replace bulbs every 6 months.

For more information on UV lighting, read [Understanding UVA, UVB, and UVC Reptile Lighting](#).



HANDLING

Overtime you will build a special connection with your turtle during feeding and caring for them, and they will come to recognize you. However, musk turtles are a bit on the feisty side and can bite if they get uncomfortable, not to mention the strong odor we mentioned earlier. Try not to handle your turtle unless necessary. When you do handle them, be gentle and respectful. Picking them up towards the back of their shell can help.



BE SURE TO WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING ANY REPTILES

