



Freshwater Turtle Aquaculture: Rules and Regulations

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Current Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) regulations prohibit the collection (or take) of wild turtles and eggs for commercial use, including aquaculture broodstock. There is also limited take allowed on wild freshwater turtles in regards to numbers and species for personal use ([Rule 68A-25.002, F.A.C.](#)). These regulations protecting wild populations have increased the demand for farm raised turtles. Turtles are cultured in Florida for the pet trade and food markets and are sold domestically and internationally.

Harvest and transport of wild turtles for noncommercial use is regulated by FWC. For more information please visit:

MyFWC.com/Wildlifehabitats/Wildlife/Freshwater-Turtles/



Peninsular Cooter hatchlings

Persons interested in starting a farm for commercial production and sale of turtles, must apply for an [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) and comply with [Aquaculture Best Management Practices](#), in accordance with Chapter 597, Florida Statutes.



Albino Yellow Bellied Slider

All aquaculture broodstock turtles must be acquired legally. Proof of origin should be obtained and retained for any and all freshwater turtle purchases and/or sales. Proof of origin should indicate the species, number of specimens, seller and buyer. Licensed aquaculture producers in Florida must include their Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number (AQ #) on all sale or transfer of ownership documents (receipts, bills of lading, invoices, etc).

All sales receipts must contain the following information:

- ◆ Name and address of seller
- ◆ Seller's AQ#
- ◆ Purchaser's AQ # (if Florida aquaculture farmer)
- ◆ Name and address of purchaser
- ◆ Number and species of aquaculture turtle sold
- ◆ Date of sale

Restrictions currently exist for several turtle species which prevents culture and sale in Florida. Diamondback terrapins (*Malachlemys terrapin*), box turtles (*Terrapene carolina bauri*), Escambia map turtles (*Graptemys ernstii*) and Loggerhead musk turtles (*Sternotherus minor*) all have a possession limit of two, which includes adults, sub-adults, hatchlings and eggs.

Restrictions also exist for alligator snapping turtles (*Macrochelys temminckii*), Barbour's map turtles (*Graptemys barbouri*) and Suwannee cooters (*Pseudemys suwanniensis*). See [Rule 68A-25.002, F.A.C.](#) for more information.

Not all turtles cultured in Florida are indigenous to the state. Many of the species raised for the pet trade are from exotic locations from around the world. Commercial facilities must be designed to prevent the escape of aquaculture broodstock and products. Red Eared Sliders, for example, (*Trachemys elegans scripta*) are a restricted species in Florida pursuant to [Rule 68-5.002, F.A.C.](#)

Aquaculturists wishing to culture a restricted species must meet additional containment criteria and be issued a Restricted Species Authorization specific to that species from the Division.

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Turtle Hatchling

