



Freshwater Turtle Aquaculture: Rules and Regulations

600 South Calhoun Street, Suite 217
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Tallahassee Office: (850) 617-7600

Bartow Office: (863) 578-1870

Email: Aquaculture_Certificate@FDACS.gov

Website: www.FDACS.gov

Current Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) regulations prohibit the collection (or take) of wild turtles or their eggs for commercial use, including aquaculture broodstock. There are also limited takes allowed on wild freshwater turtles in regards to numbers and species for personal use pursuant to [Rule 68A-25.002, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#). 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 both domestically and [internationally](#).

Harvest and transport of wild turtles for noncommercial use is regulated by the FWC. For more information please visit: MyFWC.com/Wildlifehabitats/Wildlife/Freshwater-Turtles/

Persons interested in starting an aquaculture farm for commercial production and sale of aquatic turtles, must apply to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Division of Aquaculture for an [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) and comply with [Aquaculture Best Management Practices \(BMPs\)](#), in accordance with [Chapter 597, Florida Statutes](#).



Albino Yellow Bellied Slider

TURTLE-SPECIFIC BMPs

- ◆ All aquaculture broodstock turtles must be acquired legally. Proof of origin must be obtained and retained for any and all freshwater turtle purchases and/or sales. Proof of origin should indicate the species, number of specimens, the seller and purchaser's contact information. Licensed aquaculture producers in Florida must include their Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number (AQ #) on all sale or transfer of ownership documents (e.g., receipts, bills of lading, invoices, etc.). Records must be retained by the hatchery or farm and available for inspection for at least two years.
- ◆ **All sales receipts from Aquaculture Certificate of Registration holders must contain the following information:**
 - ◆ Name and address of seller;
 - ◆ Seller's AQ#;
 - ◆ Purchaser's AQ # (if Florida aquaculturist);
 - ◆ Name and address of purchaser;
 - ◆ Quantity and species of aquaculture turtles sold; and
 - ◆ Date of sale.
- ◆ Aquaculture Certificate of Registration holders must maintain records of all aquatic turtle broodstock acquisition documentation and this documentation must be provided to the Division of Aquaculture for approval prior to certification and as broodstock are added to the facility.
- ◆ Aquaculture Certificate of Registration holders or employees of a certificate holder must notify FDACS at least 24 hours in advance of any transport of aquaculture turtles

across or on state waters.

- ◆ Aquaculture turtles may not be transported in vehicles or vessels containing fishing gear (including, but not limited to, trawls, seines and entangling nets, traps and hook and line).
- ◆ Aquaculture turtles may not be harvested using hook and line.

Not all turtles cultured in Florida are indigenous to the state. Many of the species raised for the pet trade are from exotic locations around the world. Commercial facilities must be designed to prevent the escapement of aquaculture broodstock and products.

RESTRICTED SPECIES TURTLE BMPs

- ◆ Red-eared sliders (*Trachemys elegans scripta*) are restricted species in Florida.
- ◆ Aquaculturists wishing to culture a restricted species must meet additional containment criteria as outlined in the [BMPs](#) and be issued a Restricted Species Authorization (RSA) specific to that species from FDACS.

For production or technical assistance, contact Dr. Roy Yanong, VMD at RPY@ufl.edu or Dr. Ruth Francis-Floyd, DVM, MS, DACZM at RFFloyd@ufl.edu.



Florida Softshell Turtle

