Turtle & Tortoise Egg Recovery

RRRCORA Project

Rescue Rehabilitation Research Conservation Of Reptiles Amphibians

Sheldon 2009

Warning Pictures May Be Disturbing

Egg Recovery

*Permitted
Rehabilitator

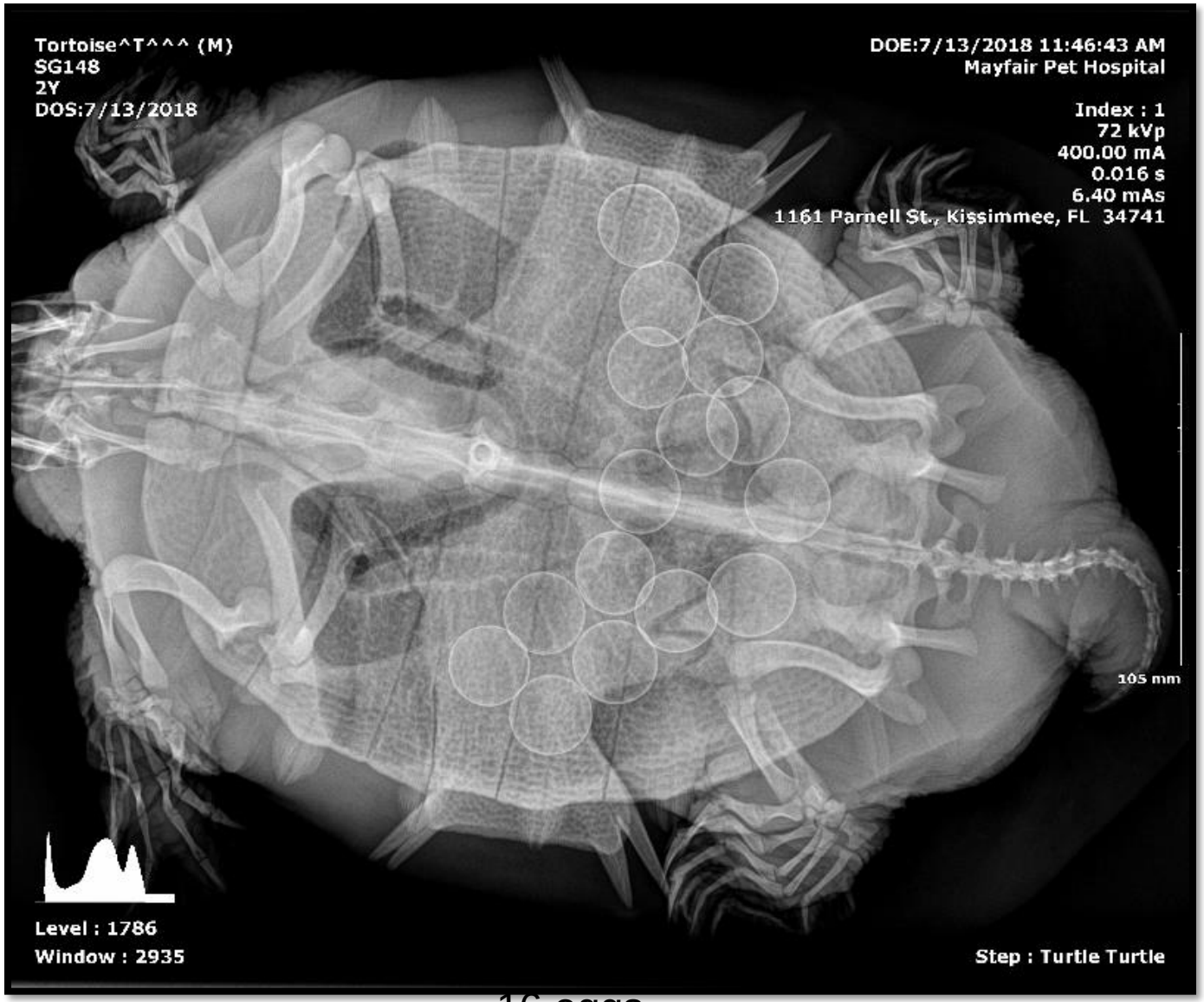
During spring and summer 80% of rehabs are HBC females looking to or coming back from laying eggs.

How to confirm the presence of eggs….

X- Ray

8 Fully formed eggs in Gopher Tortoise

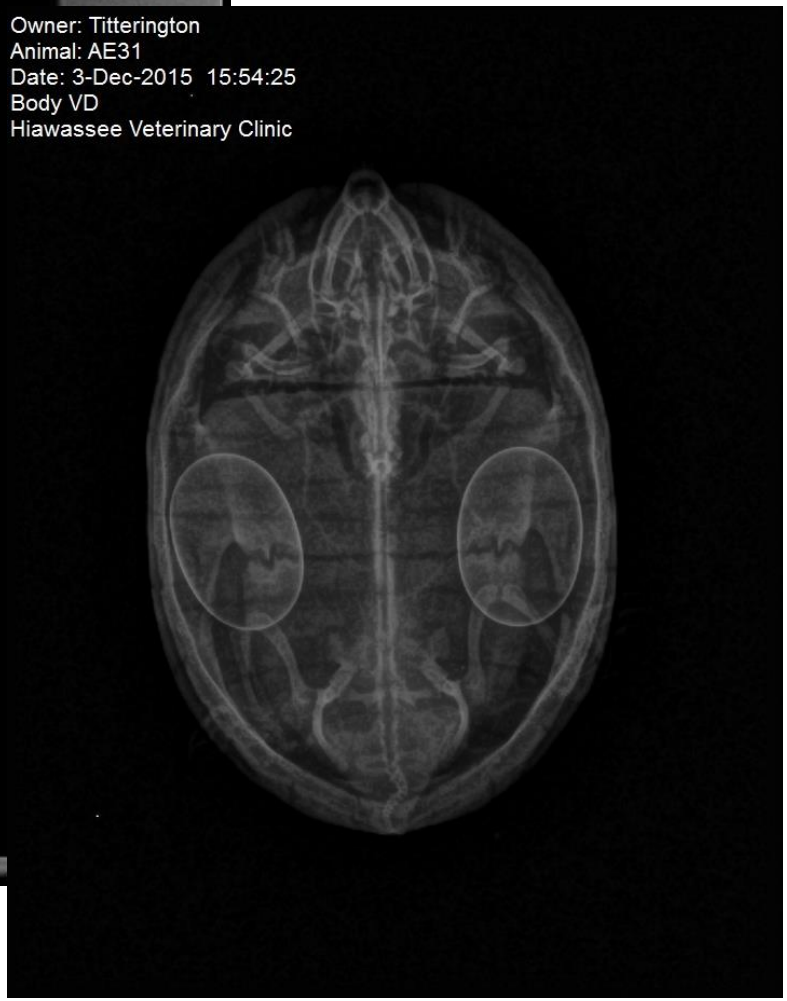
Florida Softshell Turtle



16 eggs

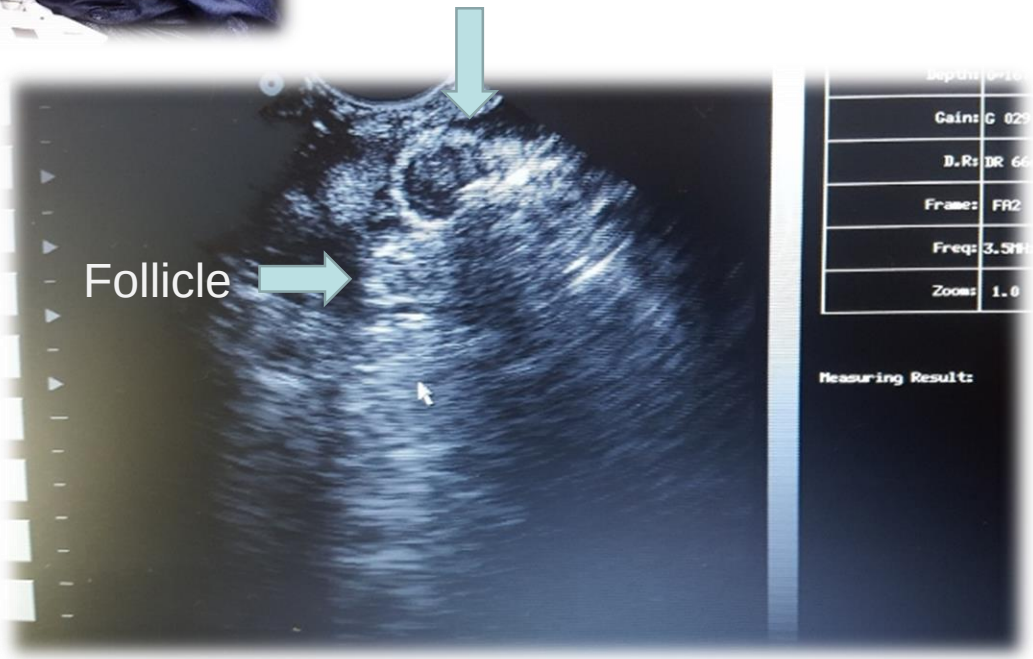
Peninsula Cooter

Striped Mud Turtle



Ultrasound to check for follicles or oviductal eggs.

Egg



**Ultrasound is also used in recently deceased animals

Recovering Females

- Turtle has a good outcome but may need help to pass eggs to avoid further complications.
- During stress of an injury, they may pass eggs while in transport or in early recovery.
- Not all eggs may pass on their own. X rays are helpful for egg counts.

Use of Oxytocin

- Start at lower dose, 90% of the time this is all that is needed. Dosage range 1- 10 U per kg
- Best when used with Calcium and well hydrated
- Lubricating the cloaca especially for animals that may have oversized eggs.
- Injection site at hind limb IM

A few eggs to 14!
2 separate females on the same day!

Checking for a heartbeat

Dopplers

Ultrasound can sometimes be used to check for a heartbeat

Gopher Tortoise Egg Recovery

Much smaller space to work with

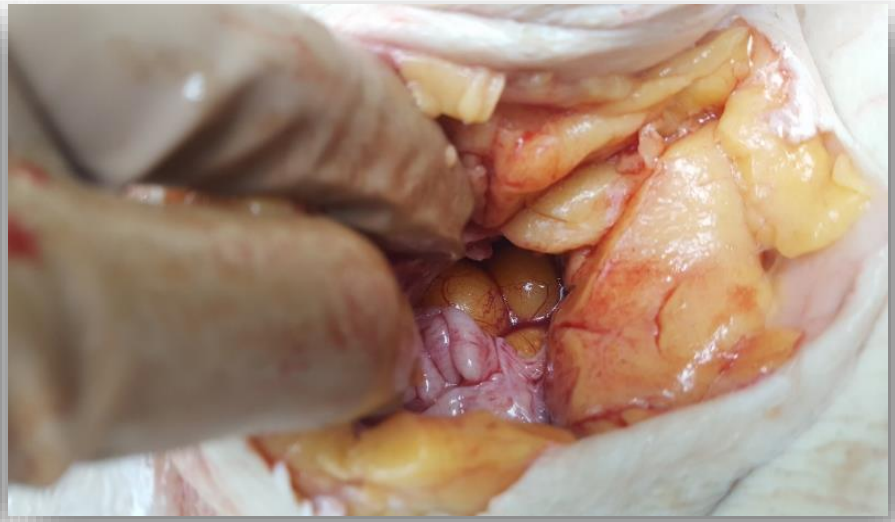
Eggs can be large and need patience

Notching out of the carapace ridge can be helpful in situations with very large eggs

Creating a notch so that the egg will pass easier.

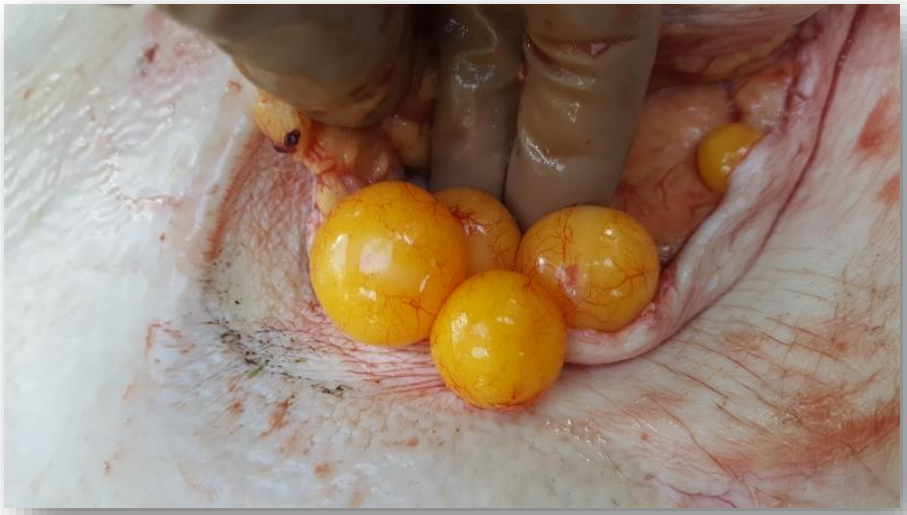
Florida Softshell Turtle

Fatty Tissue



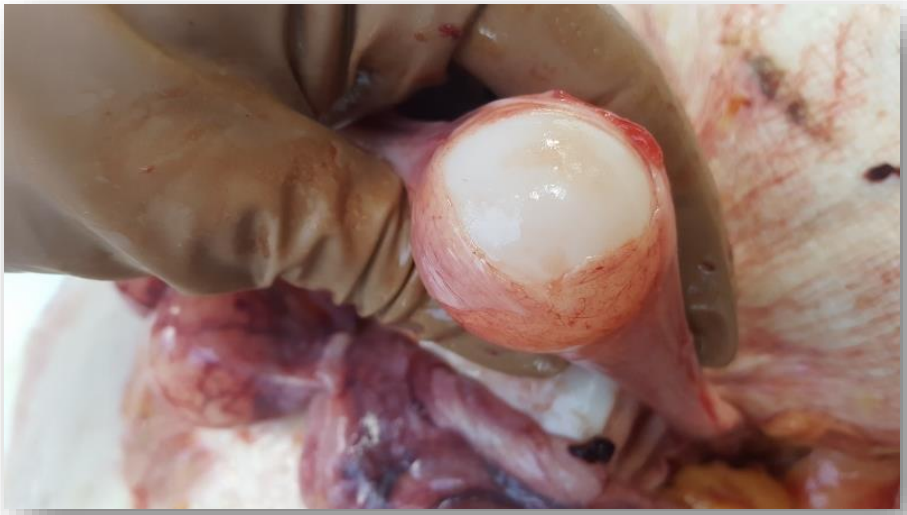
Ovary and follicles

Follicles



Oviductal egg

Incision of oviduct



Florida softshell egg removal video!

Incubation

Video

Incubation temperature 84F and 87F for both male and female hatchlings
Cooler temps males while higher temps are female

Incubate & Hatch

Turtle and tortoise humidity level 70%,
80-90% for softshell and box turtles recommended

Water spangles and common duck weed

Tortoises, Softshells and Snappers prefer sand and vermiculite substrate mix.
Most others do well with vermiculite and coconut fiber or peat moss mixture
Damp sphagnum moss overtop for all.

- Vermiculite

- Coconut fiber

Look for eggs
May-July
Incubation
80 -110 days
Hatch Aug -Nov

Gopher tortoise

Peninsular cooters

April-June Peak.
And again, in Fall
to early winter

Incubation
50- 60 days
for spring lay.
Hatch late summer
90-120 for
Fall/winter lay
Hatch in spring

Common Snapping turtle

Lay in Late Feb. to June

Incubation 55 to 125 days

Hatch Aug. to October

Florida Softshell turtle

Lay March –Aug

Incubation 60-90 days

Hatch May- Early Oct.

- Box turtles
- Laying May-July
- Incubation 60 to 90 days.
- Hatch July –Sept.

- Mud turtles
- Are know to lay throughout the year but peak season June.
- Incubation 80 to 90 days
- Hatch Aug-sept

Nursery

If you choose to jumpstart before release.

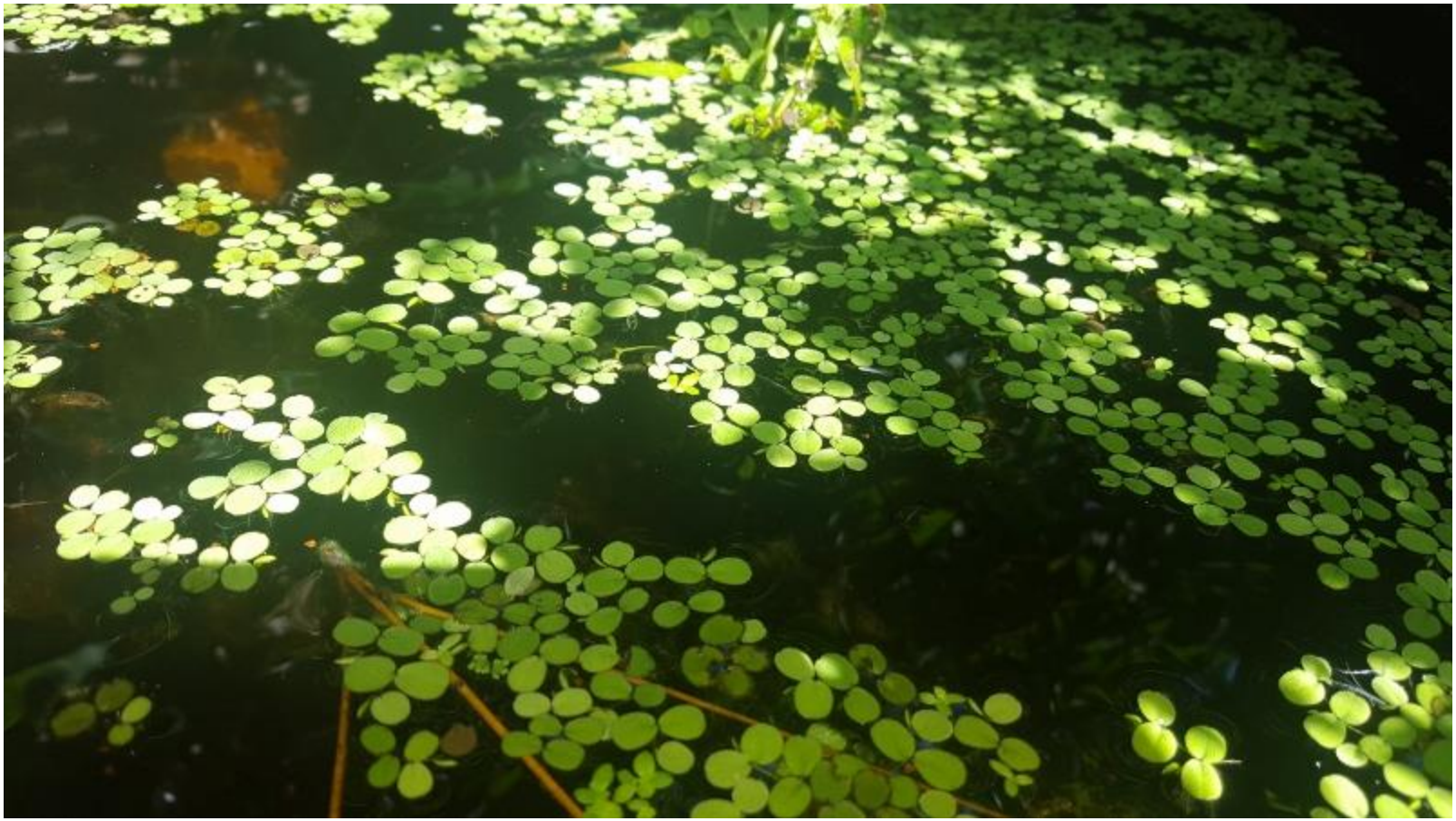
Gopher tortoise, collecting and or planting natural graze as a food source. Dandelion, clover, hibiscus and mulberry leaves are good to add if available.

Sand is a plus for softshells

Red bellied and Peninsular cooters

Water Spangles

Salvinia minima



Duck weed is another natural food plant but
leafy greens like Romain, red leaf and green leaf can be alternatives if not available.
Juvenile pellets are also a plus and can be provided along with natural greens.

Pellets

Soaked pellets and small worms (Canned or Live), berries (blue or black) and natural grazing greens work for **Box turtles.

Softshells, Snappers and Omnivores

Natural foods are a plus but softshells and snappers will often scavenge, sinking pellets are appealing and allow for natural behavior. Small or chopped earth worms/red worms are also good safe live prey. Terrapins, chicken and mud/musk turtles also enjoy this variety. Water plants can also be included.

Release Day!!

150 to a 200 per year