

## 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' mania may spell trouble for real Turtles

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### Group Urges Parents Not to Buy Turtles in Wake of Film's Release

London – The fictional stars of the new *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie may be able to survive an attack from The Shredder's Foot Clan, but real turtles can't, which is why PETA is telling fans that the last thing they should do is rush out and buy a turtle after the film's release this week.

Invariably, after the release of movies or TV shows featuring animals (even animated ones), people get caught up in the fad of buying real-life versions of the celluloid stars. For example, despite the movie's anti-captivity message, sales of clownfish soared after the release of *Finding Nemo*, as did sales of owls in the wake of the *Harry Potter* movies. Later, after realising that it's difficult to make a lifetime commitment to an animal purchased on impulse, many buyers either ignore their briefly cherished companions or abandon them.

"From abusive dealers, breeders and smugglers to guardians who have no idea how to care for an exotic animal properly, buying a turtle is a bad idea from start to finish", says PETA's Kirsty Henderson. "We can all be heroes to turtles by refusing to support the cruel exotic-'pet' trade."

Turtles and other reptiles sold in pet shops are either caught in the wild (potentially damaging fragile ecosystems) or bred in cramped, filthy breeding mills. The animals are often drugged and stuffed into suitcases so that they can be illegally smuggled across borders. Many do not survive the journey, and those who do usually arrive in poor health.

Reptiles are often infected with salmonellosis and other zoonotic diseases. In the 1970s, the sale of turtles less than 4 inches long was banned in the US in order to stop the growing number of reported salmonellosis cases. The ban resulted in a 77 per cent reduction in the disease the following year.

Turtles are perceived as requiring minimal care, but they have very specific needs, including controlled temperatures, enough water to swim in, a large housing area and a varied diet. Many exotic animals die within a year of purchase because of improper care, but if properly cared for, a turtle may live for 25 years or longer, requiring a serious commitment of time and resources.

PETA's letter to parents groups is available to view [here](#). For more information about keeping exotic animals as companions, please visit [PETA.org.uk](http://PETA.org.uk).

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