

SOFT-SHELLED TURTLE IN PHANG-NGA

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She had studied accountancy, and worked for a company. Then she decided to be an orchard owner but could not profit from the job. So she decided to have a new soft-shelled turtle farm under the name of Chokeroong Farm. She had been advised by her younger brother who used to work in a soft-shelled turtle farm in Phuket. She owned a 30 rai (12 acre) orchard, 10 rai/2 acre for rubber trees, the other for orchard and a soft-shelled turtle Farm. In her orchard there were 100 langsat trees which used to have problems with stem-boring grubs and caused the trees to die from the top gradually. The use of chemicals was not effective, and she did not know how to solve the problems.

In 1994 she took a Kyusei Nature Farming course at Saraburi Centre. After that she made Bokashi and put it under the shade of the langsat trees. It was not a long time before the bark was falling down, and the diseases disappeared. A lot of young arose. It was amazing because ten years ago there were not any flowers, but there were lots of flowers after using Bokashi.

For the soft-shelled turtles, she had bought 2,000 babies from a Rayong farm. They cost 45 baht each. When they were eight months old the males would be separated and sold. They cost about 470-500 baht per kilo, and the weight of one turtle was about 3-4 grams. After one year female breeders were separated and lived in the same pond as male breeders at the rate of 5:1. The rest of the males would be sold, they cost about 760-800 baht per kilo, and the weight of one turtle was about 5-7 grams.

INCUBATION POND PREPARATION

A cement pond was built, it was 1.5 metres wide, 1 metre deep and length depending on the owner. Sand was put into the pond about 70 centimetres high. Later female breeders laid eggs in the places which were provided for them. The eggs were moved to the incubation pond by putting them on the sand in a row and covering them with the sand about 10 centimetres thick. The temperature in the pond was not more than 30 degrees Celsius. Water would be sprayed on the sand if the temperature was higher.

The eggs would hatch in 45-60 days. The babies would then be moved to the baby pond. For one baby the cost was 100 baht, but for one egg the cost was only 40 baht. After seven days in the baby pond, they were moved to the raising pond until they were 6-8 months old then they were sold to the consumers.

FEEDING

One week old babies were fed on catfish feed, then fish feed until they were one months old. For 1-3 month old turtles, they were fed twice a day (in the morning and evening). For ten month old turtles the feed was decreased to once a day. The feed was made of small fish which was chopped into small pieces.

With regard to EM application, EM was used to mix with the feed, and suppress foul odor in

the pond. In one month, only 5 litres of EM was used and she paid about 3,000-4,000 baht for the feed.

RESULTS

1. The water in the pond was very clean and clear with a good smell.
2. All soft-shelled turtle were very strong and healthy.
3. Compared to other farms with the same turtles (one month), they were bigger and heavier than the other ones.

PROBLEMS

1. Beware of birds, rats, cats and snakes.
2. Diseases might happen up until they are three months old.
3. They should be taken good care of while transferring them to the other pond in order to prevent them being stressed.

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