Housing Two-Toed Sloths

Sloths do best in housing that imitates their natural environment.



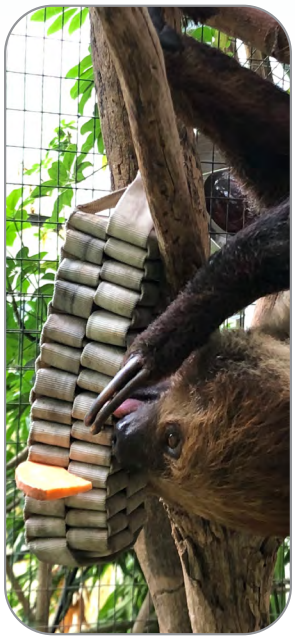
Environmental Conditions and Light



Sloths can't regulate their body temperature the way other animals do. If the environment is too warm or too cold, it can slow or even shut down their digestive system. Humidity levels are important for keeping skin and pads healthy. Sloths need:

- Constant warm temperatures between 75 and 85 °F
- High humidity of 60–80%
- Protected areas free from drafts
- Access to heated and shaded/cooler areas when housed outdoors

The right lighting promotes normal activity patterns. Sloths benefit from direct sunlight or a broad-spectrum light source for basking. Shade (simulating leaf cover) allows sloths to adjust their exposure to suit their needs. A light cycle set to 12 hours on/12 hours off mimics light in the tropics.



Enclosures

Well-designed enclosures support natural sloth behaviors such as hanging upside down or reclining on their backs. Essential housing components include:

- A climbing structure with a central trunk and branches of different widths and heights
- Loose, non-toxic substrate (such as shavings, dirt, mulch, or leaf litter) deep enough for digging near the base of the central trunk to support normal elimination behaviors
- Platforms, hammocks, and tree nooks to offer varied resting areas
- Clean drinking water at multiple levels from a hanging bottle and a dish
- Visual screens such as plant material or den boxes for hiding
- When group housed, space for each sloth to sleep away from others



PRACTICAL TIP

Sloths have long claws that wear down naturally with movement. An enclosure design that encourages movement may reduce the need to trim their claws, which can require sedation. Hanging dietary items at various levels helps further promote natural exploration and movement.

ANIMAL CARE AID

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