



Husbandry Handbook

RUSSIAN, HERMANN'S, GREEK, MARGINATED TORTOISES *Testudo species*

Keep Time in Mind

Tortoises are one of the most amazing groups of reptiles on the planet. They are extremely intelligent and can live from 50-200+ years! When it comes to choosing a tortoise as a pet, this is something you must keep in mind. Unlike more traditional pets, a tortoise will probably outlive you. You need to make sure you are ready to give this animal a forever home regardless of the inevitable changes that happen throughout life. The species listed in this care sheet generally live around 50-60 years and stay small and manageable for any sized home.

Habitat

The genus *Testudo* is made up of six species, three of which are commonly kept and bred in the pet trade and are the focus of this care sheet. They range from northern Africa to western Asia and into Europe. They inhabit a range of habitats including rocky hillsides, Mediterranean scrub, fields and meadows, and dry forests, all of which are more arid environments. They are diurnal and often found out during the day grazing on grasses and other vegetation.

Housing

Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a 40BR Zilla® Critter Cage® product makes a great home. Substrates that enable burrowing such as a Zilla® Lizard Litter, Zilla® Bark Blend, and Zilla® Jungle Mix are good choices. Outdoor pens can work in temperate climates and during the warmer months in other climates. They also provide ample access to natural sunlight. Outdoor pens must have a perimeter at least 8-9" deep and at least 12" high. Be sure to make sure the enclosure is sealed to keep out predators. Although

they derive much of their water from their food, it is best to provide a shallow water dish or pan within the enclosure. Soak them in lukewarm water once a week for hydration.

Temperature and Lighting

It is important to create a thermal gradient (a warm side and a cool side) in the cage/enclosure. Ideal temperatures for these tortoises range from 75-85°F on the cool side and 80-85°F on the warm side. Provide a 95-100°F basking area on the warm side. All tortoises require UVB lighting to thrive and be healthy. Using a Zilla® Heat & UVB Basking Fixture with a Zilla® 50W Mini Halogen Bulb and a Zilla® Desert Series 50 UVB Bulb will provide the correct heat and UVB needed for your tortoise to thrive. Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces and uneaten food at least twice per week. Every 3 months, remove all substrate in order to clean and disinfect the tank and décor.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, tortoises are herbivores and will graze upon a variety of grasses, flowers and other plant matter. Feed *Testudo* tortoises in captivity a varied assortment of chopped up greens and vegetables daily. Avoid spinach and citric fruits. Be sure all food intended for tortoises is pesticide and herbicide free. Many of these are readily available in any grocer's market. Another option they enjoy is Zilla® Reptile Munchies Veggie Mix. Spray their veggies daily with Zilla® Vitamin Supplement Spray and Calcium Supplement Spray to provide them with the proper vitamins and minerals they need to stay healthy.

Handling

Hatchling tortoises may be shy and hide in their shells at first. As you begin to handle, feed and be around them more, they will become accustomed to you. Over time they can even learn their name and will associate you with food and activities. When handling your tortoise, make sure to handle them deliberately and gently, taking care not to drop or injure them. Keep them close to the ground so they don't fall far if they get out of your hands. As they grow with you, they will become more and more personable and interactive.

Be sure to wash your hands after handling any reptiles.

