

TORTOISE HABITAT SETUP & CARE

Tortoises are long-lived, hearty, and interesting animals. Although they are endearing pets, they do require specific care and can be a small challenge to care for. It takes time and dedication to make sure that your tortoise stays healthy and strong. Once you commit to a new pet tortoise, you'll want to be prepared with the supplies you need to ensure a smooth and healthy transition to your care.



Enclosure

Create a habitat that mimics the natural environment of your tortoise. Setting up an outdoor pen for at least part of the year is recommended. House your pet turtle in the largest possible enclosure. As a rule of thumb, the enclosure's volume should be at least 10 gallons per 1 inch of your pet's shell length. Keep in mind that if your pet is a juvenile, it will grow over time and require more space. If you are using an indoor enclosure, make sure it is well-ventilated, properly lit, and has a screened lid to prevent it from escaping.

Substrate

You'll need to adjust your substrate choice based on the specific species of your tortoise. Use pelleted, mulch, or moss-type substrate that retains moisture; some tortoises may eat substrate—if they do, switch to something they can't eat.

Temperature & Lighting

Tortoises like to soak up the rays and are most active during the day. If your pet's enclosure doesn't get a lot of natural sun, light it for 10-12 hours each day using a UVA/UVB bulb to provide the rays they need for strong bones and shells. You'll also need to set up a temperature gradient within the enclosure. You can use overhead bulbs or a heat mat to achieve this. Keep the warm side about 95-100°F and the cool side around 70-85°F. At night, the temperature throughout the enclosure should be between 60-70°F. You can also use a nightlight bulb to observe them at night without disturbing their sleep.

Quick Facts

A turtle is not a tortoise, but a tortoise is a turtle. A turtle is any shelled reptile belonging to the order Chelonii. The term tortoise more specifically refers to terrestrial, not aquatic, turtles.

Tortoises live on land, are usually herbivorous, and can't swim.

Tortoises have been on the planet for more than 200 million years.

They can live from 30-100 years!

Accessories

Include a rock or platform on the warm side of the enclosure for basking and a hide box or cave on the cool side for when your tortoise wants to seek shelter. Decorate the enclosure with lots of plants and sticks. Be sure any vegetation is edible and safe for your pet. Avoid anything steep or rickety on which your tortoise might lose their balance and fall. Don't forget a shallow dish of water for drinking and splashing.

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Diet & Nutrition

Tortoises are herbivores and require a diet made up of about 80% fresh vegetables (like kale, dandelions and collard greens) and 20% fruits (like apples, melons, and grapes), which can be supplemented with a commercial pellet diet made specifically for tortoises.

We do recommend dusting the diet once a week with a powdered vitamin and calcium supplement.

Clean dechlorinated water should be available at all times.

Handling & Safety

Most tortoises are docile and tend to be shy unless two males are put into an enclosure with each other. This is not advisable as they could become aggressive resulting in serious injury.

Let your pet adjust to its new home for three or four days before you handle them and always move slowly around tortoises to avoid startling them. Handling your tortoise too much can cause it stress; only do so when necessary. Be careful never to drop or allow your pet to fall!

Contact a veterinarian if you notice any symptoms of illness or distress such as more time spent hiding in shell, eating or drinking less, weight loss, swollen joints, discharge from the eyes or nose, discolored shell, or abnormal feces.

Shopping List

Fluker's offers an extensive line of quality products for your reptile and amphibians. For the items listed here, shop online at www.flukerfarms.com.

- Screen Cover/Clips
- Repta-Bark
- Nightlight Bulb
- Neodymium Daylight Bulb
- Repta-Sun 5.0 UVB Fluorescent Light Bulb
- Clamp Lamp
- Heat Mat
- Digital Thermo-Hygrometer
- Repta-Cave
- Repta-Bowls
- Castle Crib
- Habi-Caves
- Tortoise Pellet Diets
- Reptile Vitamin
- Calcium: Phosphorus
- Dechlorinator