

**WILDSIDE VETERINARY HEALTH CENTER**  
CARE SHEET: RUSSIAN TORTOISE



**Environment:**

- If the animal is kept inside the house in an enclosure:

- Temperature: We need two thermometers - one on the basking spot (95f), one on the cold side (70f).

- Reptiles cannot regulate their body temperature on their own, that is why it is so important that the temperature is perfect.

- A mix of coconut fiber and sphagnum moss is a good substrate option.

- A hiding spot should be kept in between the hot side and the cold side of the enclosure.

- These tortoises do well outside in Florida with a proper enclosure.

- Pens for one or two adults should be at least 2 feet by 4 feet.

- Enclosure walls should be set into the ground 6 to 12 inches to prevent the tortoises from digging under the sides, and they should be 12 inches or higher aboveground.

- Russian tortoises are burrowers. Placing large rocks under the soil in the corners helps prevent tortoises from digging out.

- Building an underground hide box that maintains more stable temperatures helps to keep them from burrowing too much.

- Shaded grassy areas that get regular water help to keep smaller tortoises cool.

**UVB Light**

- 5-0 has to be on 12h daily, unless the animal has access to direct sunlight (no glass/plastic between the animal and the sun).

- The lightbulb has to be changed every 4-6 months (even when it is bright and beautiful the UVB is not there anymore).

- Without UVB light the calcium cannot be properly absorbed/metabolized.

- If the animal is kept outside a UVB light is not needed.

**Diet**

- They are herbivores.

- Place a few large, flat rocks to put the food on top.

- They prefer broadleaf weeds and eagerly eat almost any leafy greens or vegetables offered to them.

- Salad: leafy greens, spring mix, romaine lettuce, herbs, dandelion greens, collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, bell peppers, zucchini, squash. Kale/spinach no more than once a week.

- Variety is the key!

**Water**

- They should have a water dish. Shallow, low sided dishes that are glazed to make cleaning easy are best. Cleaning needs to be done daily, as most tortoises tend to soak in their dishes.

**Supplements:**

- Calcium without vitamin D3- once daily

- Calcium with vitamin D3 - once every other week

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- Multivitamin- once a week

**Soak**

- Shallow warm water for 15 minutes
- Healthy animals 3 times a week is ideal.