

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

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- Calcium with vitamin D3 - once every other week
- Multivitamin- once a week

Soak

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