



Russian Tortoise

Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Russian Tortoise (*Testudo horsfieldii*) is found in the rocky, arid habitats of China, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. They are avid diggers and can dig burrows that are several feet long.

Adult size: 6-10 inches

Temperature: 70-85°F

DIET

Leafy greens, weeds and grasses: The majority of the diet should come from this group (>90%). Good choices include collard greens, mustard greens, chard, kale, parsley, bok choy, edible flowers. Russian tortoises can also graze on non-sprayed grasses and dandelions. Avoid iceberg and romaine lettuce, as they contain little nutritional value.

Fruit and veggies: Occasional. They enjoy berries, such as raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries as well as melons and cantaloupe. A variety of veggies are also enjoyed such as carrots and squash.

ENVIRONMENT

Russian tortoises should be kept in an enclosure that provides them with plenty of space to move around, burrow, and hide.

Lighting: Russian tortoises require a specific wavelength of light called UVB. It is required for the proper absorption of calcium. We recommend using a full-spectrum bulb, the Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by ZooMed. Leave UVB bulbs on for 14 hours a day, and make sure that the bulb is not filtered through glass or plastic. These bulbs need to be changed every 6 months because their effectiveness as a UVB ray emitter decreases over time.

Heat: Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs. The temperature gradient should be 80-85°F on the hot end and 70-75°F on the cool end. Keep a thermometer on the hot end of the enclosure, and on the cool end. Never use heat rocks and avoid heating pads.

Substrate: Use paper-based bedding, such as Carefresh or Yesterday's News. Coconut fiber is also okay to use if it is dried first. Avoid all types of sand, including calcisand.

Moisture: Wild Russian tortoises live in arid, rocky environments. Misting is not required.

MEDICAL CARE

Exams: Bring tortoises in for an exam and a fecal test once a year for routine care. We often recommend blood work depending on the age and size of your tortoise.

Common Illnesses:

Parasitic Infections: Symptoms include: loss of appetite, inability to gain weight, and slow growth. Diagnosis is made by fecal examination. Treatment involves administering an oral anti-parasitic medication.

Upper Respiratory Infection. Infections can be viral and/or bacterial. Symptoms include discharge from nose or eyes, decreased appetite, and lethargy.