



Sulcata Tortoise Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Sulcata Tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*), also known as the African Spur-Thighed Tortoise, is found in North Africa in the southern part of the Sahara Desert. They love to dig and can make very long burrows. Sulcata Tortoises grow to be very large, and can increase in size quickly.

Adult size: 60-100 cm, 100-200lbs
Temperature: 70-90 F

DIET

Grasses: The majority of their diet should consist of unsprayed grasses and hay. Orchard grass and timothy hay are two suitable types and can be found at many pet stores and feed stores. Dark leafy vegetables such as collard greens, mustard greens, and dandelion greens can be offered, but should not be substituted for grasses and hay. Edible flowers such as hibiscus, dandelion, and nasturtium can be offered as well.

ENVIORNMENT

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

Lighting: 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, Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by Zoomed. UVB bulbs should be kept on for 12-14 hours a day and the light should not be filtered through glass or plastic. These bulbs should be replaced every 6-8 months, as the amount of UVB emitted decreases over time.

Heat: Ceramic heat emitter bulbs are recommended for heating the enclosure. The temperature gradient should be 90F under the basking lamp and 70-75F in the coolest part of the enclosure. Two thermometers are recommended – one for the basking area under the lamp and one for the coolest area. Using thermometers in this way ensures a proper temperature gradient is maintained. Never use heat rocks or heating pads, which can cause burns.

Moisture: Sulcata tortoises live in arid, sparsely vegetated areas. Misting is not required. Provide a large, shallow dish of water for soaking and defecating. Change this water daily.

Substrate: Newspaper is commonly used for indoor enclosures. Paper-based products such as Carefresh or Yesterdays News can also be used. Timothy hay, alfalfa pellets or coconut fiber are okay to use if kept dry.

MEDICAL CARE

An annual exam performed by a veterinarian is recommended for proper care. Your veterinarian can advise you if any additional testing is required.