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Picture by Pisces Pet Emporium

Desert Tortoise

*Including: Sulcata Tortoise,
 Hermann's Tortoise, Russian
 Tortoise, etc.*

Geochelone sulcata, Testudo hermanni, Testudo horsfieldii, etc.

Lifespan: Average 75 years but can live over 100 years, depending on the species.

Size: Adult Sulcata Tortoises can reach 3 feet in diameter, Russian Tortoises and Hermann's Tortoises can reach only 8-10 inches on average.

Sexing: Males have a larger break in the plastron at the base of the tail than females.

Enclosure: A 4 foot by 2-foot enclosure is required for adult Russian or Hermann's Tortoises, while Sulcata's require as much space as you can give them. A large room is generally the best.

Pisces recommends: EcoFlex 4x2x2 PVC Reptile Lounge or EcoFlex Tortoise Lounge

Hiding/Climbing Spots: Tortoises require at least one hiding spot, like a cave or log hide preferably with a little bit of moss inside to provide some humidity. Don't make the hides too high as they can flip and have a hard time flipping back over.

Humidity: The enclosure should be well ventilated to keep the humidity moderate (30% to 60%) but don't exceed 60 or less than 30 for long periods of time. Use a digital hygrometer to maintain a constant humidity level.

Substrate: A mix of bark pieces or cypress mulch is best. This must be cleaned regularly to prevent health problems. **Pisces recommends: Zoomed Forest Floor.**

Heat: Maintain a temperature of as low as 21 °C at night to as high as 35 °C during the day on the basking spot (75 °F to 95 °F). The ideal ambient temperature of the enclosure should be about 76-85°F. Use a heat bulb on one portion of the tank so the animal can escape the warm area if they need to. **Pisces recommends: ExoTerra and Arcadia bulbs and fixtures.**

UV Lighting: Use of a full spectrum T5 bulb for 10-12 hours per day is required. UVB bulbs lose effectiveness and need to be replaced every 8-12 months depending on their use. **Pisces recommends: Arcadia T5 Pro D3+ 12% or 14% UVB kit depending on height of the enclosure**

Feeding: Feed a daily diet mainly of fibrous vegetables, and the occasional fruits and protein. Protein can consist of earthworms, mealworms, etc. Protein is an important part of a young tortoise's diet, but it is equally important not to feed too much protein. Too much protein in the tortoise's diet can lead to malnutrition, stunted growth, improper shell growth and can lead to the death of the tortoise.

Vitamins & Supplements: Calcium is a very important part of a tortoise's diet. Be sure to add a calcium supplement to your tortoise's food 2-4 times per week. Powdered supplements can be sprinkled over the vegetables. ***Pisces recommends: Repashy SuperVeggie Herbivore All-In-One Vitamin.***

Handling: Tortoises can be handled but since they are very fragile do not pick them up high off the ground and always hold them horizontally.

Safe Handling of Reptiles*: As with all living creatures, reptiles can carry microorganisms (including Salmonella) which can make people ill. To reduce the chances of infection, always follow these safe handling steps:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after you handle your pet, its food and anything it has touched.
- Keep your pet in a habitat designed for it; do not let your pet reptile roam around the home without proper supervision.
- Keep your pet, its food dishes and cage components out of the kitchen.
- Don't nuzzle or kiss your pet.
- Infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with a compromised immune system have a greater risk of infection. Extra caution should be taken when they are in contact with any animal. Children under 5 should handle reptiles only under adult/parent supervision.

Your New Pet: It is the responsibility of any pet owner to provide their pet with regular veterinary care to maintain their pet's health and to prevent illness. Should you experience any problems with your new pet, contact Pisces Pet Emporium. We will make every effort to assist you, but we may refer you to a qualified veterinarian if the problem is beyond our ability to treat. A pet is a large responsibility and should not be purchased without due consideration. Pets should never be released into the wild.

Pisces Recommended Setup:

- ❑ PVC Enclosure (EcoFlex 4x2x2 Reptile lounge)
- ❑ Plants (live or Exo Terra/Pangea/Komodo artificial plants can be used to add to the enclosure but make sure they are safe to be eaten if live)
- ❑ Exo Terra Hiding cave/log (Living World Tree House Log Hides are recommended) multiple hides are better
- ❑ Basking rock/area
- ❑ Exo Terra/Zoomed/Pet-Tekk medium water dish(shallow)
- ❑ Exo Terra ceramic food dish
- ❑ Tortoise Hay
- ❑ Sphagnum Moss to add a little humidity
- ❑ Zoomed Forest Floor substrate (deep enough to allow the tortoise to burrow)
- ❑ NewCal Cuttle bone to help keep their beaks filed down
- ❑ Exo Terra 150w Intense Daylight Basking Lamp & Flukers 8.5in Dimmable Deluxe Clamp Lamp
- ❑ Arcadia E27 100W ceramic heater and ceramic clamp lamp can be added if more heat is needed
- ❑ Arcadia T5 Pro D3+ 12% UVB kit
- ❑ Repashy SuperVeggie supplement
- ❑ Exo Terra digital thermometer and hydrometer or combometer
- ❑ Komodo Dandelion seed growth kit to add some variety to their diet
- ❑ Mazuri Tortoise Pellet Diet or Zoomed Grassland tortoise food (moisten before feeding)