



FACT SHEET - TORTOISES

Tortoises are long-lived and vary greatly in size. Their habitat and dietary requirements vary between the species. When keeping tortoises, it is essential that you find out as much as you can about their needs during the different seasons and especially about their health and hibernation - this page gives basic facts only.



Tortoises Need

- A summer enclosure so the tortoise can walk about without getting lost; the area should be at least 10 square metres, with a waterproof shelter raised off the ground with a ramp so the tortoise can climb in.
- Winter accommodation for hibernation which should be kept in a dry garage or shed
- A well balanced diet throughout the summer which should include fresh vegetables, flowers, fruit and dried grasses for roughage.
- A large shallow dish of fresh, clean water. Tortoises like to paddle as well as drink.

Tortoise health

- Keep a record of their weight to make sure they put on weight during the summer
- After a clean bill of health from the vet, food should be withheld for 4 weeks before hibernation else continued fermentation of food in the gut can cause illness during the hibernation period.
- Clean the mouth and nose with warm water after the winter hibernation
- Seek veterinary advice if your tortoise does not start eating after hibernation
- Take your tortoise to the vet straight away if you see any signs of illness or discharge, or any damage to their shell

Tortoise facts

- Their average lifespan is 50 to 100 years
- There are 50 living species world-wide
- Tortoises can burrow and find small holes in fences and escape
- Tortoises do not usually breed in this Country but quite often lay eggs, mostly infertile, generally between June and August
- Most species do not incubate or care for their young
- Eggs and hatchlings need special care

This is intended as a quick guide only. Further information should be obtained before embarking on keeping this type of pet.