



Sulcata Tortoise

(Centrochelys sulcata)

Facts:

Average adult size: **75 to 100 lbs**

Average life span: **70+ years with proper care**

Diet: **Herbivore**



The 3rd largest tortoise in the world. Sulcata tortoises are sometimes referred to as African spurred, African spur thigh, and just spurred tortoises. This tortoise is Crypuscular which means it comes out during the dawn hours and the dusk hours. During the day they stay in a burrow.

Sulcata tortoises grow rapidly for the first five to 10 years, and then their growth slows with age.

Feeding & Nutrition:

Diet

- High fiber and calcium, low protein and fat needed to ensure good digestive tract function.
- Dark green leafy vegetables, squash, carrots, etc.; fruit should be given sparingly as a treat.
- Commercial tortoise diet, but should be no more than 25% of the diet.
- **Never feed: Rhubarb, Beans of any kind, dog food, pasta.**

Feeding

- Fresh, clean, chlorine-free water should be available at all times. Some tortoises have a tendency to go to the bathroom in their water bowl, so expect to clean and disinfect this daily.
- Feed tortoises daily; finely chop vegetables.
- Sprinkle food with calcium supplement daily and a multi-vitamin supplement once or twice a week.
- Discard vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours.

Housing:

- **Size** - appropriate size habitat to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise.
- **Habitat** - Given the tremendous amount of room these tortoises need to roam, maintaining them inside year round is not advised. Temporary *indoor* housing, as for hatchlings, sick individuals or during inclement weather, can be set up. It must include both basking and cooler retreat areas. An area for feeding and a shallow water dish must also be provided. UVB must be provided as well as suitable temperature ranges during both the day (80 F) with a basking area (100 F) and night (72 F). *Outdoors*: Sulcatas can be housed outdoors only if they are provided dry, heated housing into which they will retire at night and during inclement weather.
- **Substrate** - use hay (timothy, Bermuda, alfalfa, orchard grass, etc.)
- **Temperature** - temperature gradient (100°F for the warm end and 70°F for the cool end); recommend radiant heat. Use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source.
- **Lighting** - UVB rays with full spectrum lighting for 10-12 hours a day is required. An

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incandescent day bulb can be used for basking area during daylight hours only; can use a ceramic heater or black or red incandescent at all hours.

- **Do not house different tortoise species together.**

Habitat Maintenance

- Thoroughly clean the habitat at least once a week; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell. Dry the tank and furnishings completely and add clean substrate.

Care:

Grooming & Hygiene

- Weekly water soaks with water level no deeper than the mid-point between the bottom of the tortoise's shell and it's top.

Health

- Active and alert
- Eats regularly
- Healthy shell
- Clear, bright eyes
- Healthy skin
- Clear nose and vent

Normal Behavior

- Sulcatas like to move around and are very strong -- they must have a large area in which to freely and widely roam.
- They are also climbers. Care must be taken to assure they are not given the opportunity to climb things that are too steep resulting in their toppling over. If they flip onto their backs and are not able to right themselves, they may suffocate.
- Sulcatas also need to burrow away from the heat and do so by retreating to the shade or into muddy wallows. When temperatures exceed 104 F, they will begin to salivate, smearing saliva on their forearms to help cool themselves down.

Recommended Supplies:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate Size Habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> UVB Fixture and Bulb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Food | <input type="checkbox"/> Calcium Supplement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substrate | <input type="checkbox"/> Vitamin Supplement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food/Water Dish | <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hide | <input type="checkbox"/> Humidity Gauge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Fixture and Bulb | |

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