

# Care Guide

## Russian Tortoise

(Testudo horsfieldii)

### Facts:

Average adult size: **8 to 10 inches**

Average life span: **up to 50+ years with proper care**

Diet: **Herbivore**



Russian tortoises are small, making them easy for most people with limited space to keep. They are also feisty, eager to eat and more active than some other tortoises. When allowed to burrow, Russian tortoises also have one of the highest tolerances for temperature extremes.

*Will reach adult size in 20-30 years, under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your reptile grows.*

### 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** - Indoor enclosure should be at least 36"x12"; outdoor enclosure should be at least 48"x48" with a secure screened cover to allow sunshine but provide protection, with walls high enough that the tortoise can't escape and buried at least 12" into the ground, as tortoises will dig.
- **Habitat** - Keep habitat arid and dry, with shaded areas to escape direct sunlight. Humid climates may need a dehumidifier; cool climates require supplemental heating. Provide a hiding area, such as a cave or hide box filled with additional substrate. Maintain less than 60% humidity.
- **Substrate** - Tortoises are known for eating substrate. Use something that is digestible such as alfalfa pellets; substrate should be deep enough for the tortoise to burrow. Don't use coarse substrates such as sand or gravel that can scratch the shell.
- **Temperature** - Temperature gradient (85°F for the warm end and 75°F for the cool end); recommend using an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source.

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- **Lighting** - Providing UVB lighting for 12 to 14 hours a day is required.
- Same-species tortoises can be kept together, but do not house different tortoise species together.

## Habitat Maintenance

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week: place tortoise in a secure habitat; 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

- Active, friendly and outgoing
- Will become tame with gentle handling and time; move slowly around tortoises to avoid startling them.
- Adept at digging to escape; hide in objects and burrow into substrate.

## Recommended Supplies:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <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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