

Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

African Spur-Thigh Tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*)

General Information

African Spur-Thigh tortoises are the third largest tortoise in the world. Adult male tortoises can reach 125-240 pounds, while females typically reach 65-100 pounds. African Spur tortoises originate from Central Africa where it is very dry and they get most of their moisture from the plants that they eat. African Spur tortoises are known to dig and burrow extensively in the wild. When keeping your tortoise outside make sure the area is escape proof. Also remember that African Spur tortoises do not hibernate and if kept outside you must provide your tortoise a heated shelter for the winter months. The oldest African Spur tortoise in captivity is 54 years old however, one could expect these tortoises to reach 50-100 years old. Adult Spur tortoises can be aggressive towards each other and they are best kept alone or in male/female pairs.



Temperature and UV Lighting

African Spur Thigh Tortoises need to be kept between 90-100 degrees during the day and the temperature can drop to about 70 at night. UVB lighting allows the tortoise to naturally produce Vitamin D3. Vitamin D3 allows the tortoise to metabolize the proper amounts of calcium. A UVB light should be on 12-14 hours every day. Without UVB lighting the tortoise will eventually get metabolic bone disease. This causes the tortoises' bones to get soft and eventually will kill the tortoise. When kept outdoors no UVB lighting is needed, natural sunlight covers all requirements. Also it is very important to change your UVB light every 6-8 months, after this time the light stops producing adequate UVB. If you're not sure if your UV light is still producing UVB, bring it in and we'll be happy to test the light for you.

Housing

The cage for an African Spur tortoise should be big enough for it to have enough room to move around easily. For a baby to 4" a 20gallon is sufficient. From 4"-10" at least a 60gallon will be needed. After 10" your tortoise can be kept outside.

Bedding

Different beddings have positive and negative effects when used for reptiles. The bedding should consist of something digestible. If it is not digestible the bedding can cause impaction if the tortoise accidentally ingests it. The safest bedding is cage carpet, however, fine sand or rabbit pellets can be used. Make sure to provide a type of bedding that maintains a low humidity.

Calcium

Baby and juvenile tortoises should have calcium and vitamin supplement put on their vegetables everyday. This can be reduced to 1-2 times a week as an adult. When kept indoors the supplement must contain Vitamin D3, because the UVB light alone does not produce enough D3 by itself. Once the tortoise is large enough to live outdoors, you cannot use a D3 supplement. Natural sunlight allows the tortoise to produce the perfect amount of D3 to keep it healthy. Over supplementation of D3 can be harmful to your tortoise.

Food and Water

African Spur Thigh tortoises should be fed grasses and mixed vegetables daily. They can be fed a variety of leafy greens such as collard greens, mustard greens, red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, dandelion greens, hibiscus leaves and flowers, green onions, spinach, green beans, zucchini, frozen mixed vegetables, timothy hay, and alfalfa. Fruits should only make up about 10% of their diet. Never feed your tortoise iceberg lettuce because it lacks the nutritional contents necessary for proper health. African Spurs get the water they need from the plants that they eat, however we recommend that you soak your tortoises two times a week in shallow water to prevent dehydration.

Cleaning and Handling

The terrarium should be cleaned as necessary. Any fecal matter or left over food should be cleaned out several times a week. The bedding should be completely changed once a month. The inside of the terrarium can be cleaned out with an appropriate reptile cage cleaner, we recommend Natural Chemistry's Healthy Habitat. Fresh clean water should always be provided. African Spur Tortoises can be handled on a daily basis and always wash your hands before and after handling them.

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Prehistoric Pets Inc. (909) 465-6085

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