

Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

Hermann's Tortoise (Testudo hermann)

General Information

Hermann's tortoises are found throughout the Mediterranean from Spain to Turkey. The typical habitat for Hermann's tortoises is open forests and grasslands. Southern California is very similar to their native climate and these tortoises will do well if kept outdoors. Large birds such as crows can kill young tortoises so it's best to keep hatchlings indoors. Hermann's tortoises stay fairly small and rarely exceed eight inches. Males are smaller than females and adult males have a noticeably longer tail. Captive breeding is common and females will lay 2-10 eggs that hatch within 125 days.

Temperature and UV Lighting

Hermann's tortoises need to be kept between 88-92 degrees during the day and the temperature can drop to about 65 at night. These tortoises are capable of hibernating if kept outdoors. Hermann's tortoises require 12-14 hours of UVB light for proper health and growth. This light enables the tortoise to produce vitamin D3. The vitamin D3 produced by UVB metabolizes the calcium in the tortoises' diet. In general, it's what makes tortoises' bones hard, and without it they can die. This process of inadequate UVB and calcium is called Metabolic Bone Disease. 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 a Hermann's tortoise should be big enough for it to have room to move around easily. Our recommendation for adults is a 40 gallon or larger terrarium. Hermann's tortoises can also be kept outside in areas where the weather is similar to their natural habitat. If you plan to keep your tortoise outside make sure the area is secure. These tortoises can dig and have been known to escape under fences.

Bedding

Different beddings have positive and negative effects when used for reptiles. The best type of bedding for Hermann's tortoises would be cage carpet. Other types of beddings are bark or rabbit pellets. 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

Hermann's 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. A shallow water dish should be available at all times.

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. Hermann's tortoises can be handled on a daily basis and always wash your hands before and after handling them.

