

Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

Leopard Tortoise (*Geochelone pardalis* sp.)

General Information

Leopard tortoises are found throughout East and South Africa. These tortoises prefer habitats that are semi arid such as savannahs and dry woodlands. There are two species of leopard tortoises. The first is *Geochelone pardalis pardalis*, which is the larger of the two types, this tortoise can reach an adult size of up to 100 pounds and measure 26 inches front to back. The other type is *Geochelone pardalis babcocki*, this type is smaller reaching 30-50 pounds and can measure 15-18 inches. Leopard tortoises can live 50-100 years or more provided that they have adequate care. If you plan to house your Leopard tortoise outside make sure it has a dry heated area. These tortoises do not hibernate and will die if exposed to cold temperatures. One of the best qualities in a Leopard tortoise is that they are not known diggers and are less likely to dig under a fence and escape.



Temperature and UV Lighting

Leopard Tortoises need 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 the tortoise should be big enough for it to have enough room to move around easily. For a baby to 6" a 20gallon is sufficient. From 6"-10" a cage that is 4'X 2' will be needed. After 10" it can be moved 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, 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

Leopard 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. Leopard tortoises get the water they need from the plants that they eat, however, we recommend that you soak baby tortoises five to seven 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. Leopard Tortoises can be handled on a daily basis. Always wash your hands before and after handling them.

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