

# Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

## Red-Footed Tortoise (*Geochelone carbonaria*)

### General Information

Red-Footed tortoises are found throughout South America, southern Panama, and several Caribbean islands. These tortoises are usually found near forests and are most active in the morning or late afternoon. Adult Red-Footed tortoises can reach 6-13 inches and the beautiful cherry head Red-Foot from Argentina is slightly smaller. Red-Footed tortoises can be kept outside if the temperatures are acceptable. During the winter months, a heated shelter should be provided if you plan to keep your tortoise outside permanently. Red-Footed tortoises do not hibernate and will die if exposed to cold temperatures. Since these tortoises come from a tropical area, we recommend that you spray your tortoises' pen with water from the hose or sprinklers everyday. Adult tortoises can be sexed fairly easily, males have a concave plastron and longer tails. Female Red-Footed tortoises have a flat plastron and the tail is noticeably smaller. These tortoises breed easily and females will have 1-5 clutches a year containing 4-13 eggs in each clutch.



### Temperature and UV Lighting

Red-Footed tortoises need to be kept between 85-90 degrees during the day and the temperature can drop to 70 or above at night. Red-Footed tortoises come from a humid environment and the humidity should be maintained from 70-80%. This level of humidity can be accomplished by misting the cage daily with water. 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. Baby and juvenile tortoises can be housed in a 29 gallon terrarium. Once your tortoise is over 6 inches it can be safely kept outside.

### Bedding

The best type of bedding would be some type of bark or Zoo Meds' Eco Earth. These beddings hold moisture very well allowing a higher humidity in the cage. Ideally, the bedding should also be kept a few inches deep to provide a place to burrow.

### Calcium

A calcium and vitamin supplement should be put on its vegetables every day as a baby. 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

Red-Footed tortoises should be fed fruits and 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, and frozen mixed vegetables. Fruits should only make up about 25% of their diet. Never feed your tortoise iceberg lettuce because it lacks the nutritional contents necessary for proper health. Fresh clean water should be provided 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. Red-Footed tortoises can be handled on a daily basis. Always wash your hands before and after handling them.

[www.reptileguru.com](http://www.reptileguru.com)

**Prehistoric Pets Inc. (909) 465-6085**