

Spur-Thighed Tortoise Juveniles

The Spur-thighed tortoise is a very popular species of tortoise. In order to be sold, these tortoises must be microchipped and come with paperwork under CITES regulations. It is one of five species of Mediterranean tortoise but there are also many subspecies of spur-thighed tortoises. They should be expected to live over at least 50 years, if not reaching 80-100 years.

Do not confuse this species with the African spurred tortoise which will grow to be huge in comparison.

Pre-purchase requirement: You must have a garden or a large rooftop garden in order to purchase a tortoise from us.



Hibernation

It is ideal to start hibernation in tortoises of 4 years and up. The first hibernation should be 3 months and it is now recommended that a fridge is used for this purpose. The reason for this is British winter temperatures are erratic and can disturb the hibernation process. When using the fridge method, depending on size, the door must be opened once a week to allow a change of air. Do not leave the door open for too long or the temperature will go up. The tortoises will also need a misting once a month to stop them dehydrating. Use a substrate such as straw, slightly damp sawdust or equivalent. This must not be wet and soggy.

If you are unsure of any of the information on this leaflet please call either Mandy or Barry our tortoise experts.

If you require any further information, please ask our pet care advisors who will be very happy to help.

Opening Times

Monday – Saturday: 9am – 6pm
Sunday: 9.30am – 4pm

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**Chessington**

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Care & Advice Sheet

Inspiration for your Home & Garden

Size & Housing

Size will often depend on the subspecies and sex of the tortoise. The largest of the subspecies can grow to 24–28cm. On average, an adult female can reach approximately 22cm while males are smaller and may only reach 18cm. When juvenile, these tortoises must be housed in a wooden vivarium to maintain the levels of heat they need. When older, they may be housed in a tortoise table and eventually the garden.

36x18x18" – Minimum for 1 Juvenile

48x18x18" – Minimum for 2 Juveniles

Handling

Always support the whole body. If they feel stressed or uncomfortable they will often defecate when being held. They may be taken out of their enclosure if the ambient temperature is warm but they can lose their heat quickly. During the summer months when it is warm, they should be put outside in a covered run to benefit from natural sunlight and greens.

Substrate & Furnishings

It is best to have the substrate split in half. We recommend one half of beech chips large enough to not be eaten and one half reptile carpet. At night, the tortoise will bury itself in the beech chips and roam around on the carpet in the heat during the day. Provide a log hide for the tortoise to sleep under and feel secure. Use rough

surfaced stone in the enclosure for them to wear down their nails. Spot pick the enclosure daily and full clean once or twice a month using a reptile specific disinfectant.

Lighting & Temperature

Provide essential UVB at 12% to create a daytime cycle of 10–12 hours a day. This is best controlled by a timer. The UVB must be replaced between 6 to 12 months. They need a basking area with a temperature of at least 32°C – this is best achieved by using a heat bulb with a guard controlled by a thermostat. There should be a temperature gradient in the enclosure varying by a few degrees. The temperature in the vivarium should never drop below 24°C for juveniles.

The thermostat is recommended because it will regulate the temperature if it is too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter.

Juvenile tortoises cannot hold their body temperature. Low temperatures create a lack of appetite and possibly runny nose syndrome which can be fatal. This is why juveniles must be housed in a vivarium which creates a controlled environment.

Tortoises of 4 years and above do not require vivariums and should be kept in an open top tortoise table, where an adequate UVA and UVB heat bulb should be used.

Please Note – If the temperature in your house falls below 10°C, the tortoise will go into hibernation mode.

Food & Water

A happy tortoise produces semi-squidgy poo in the shape of pellets.

Tortoises must be fed at least either one large meal or two small meals a day. A fresh diet is best but they can also be supplemented with tortoise pellets 1–2 days a week. Suitable options include:

- Dark leafy greens
- Rocket
- Kale
- Watercress
- Mustard cress
- Carrot
- Mixed peppers
- Dandelion greens
- Clover

Treats – **once or twice a week only:**

- Strawberries
- Apple
- Tomato
- Cucumber

Overfeeding on treats will cause intestinal problems.

Do not feed your tortoise grapes or spinach. Spinach is a calcium blocker.

Dust the salad with a calcium supplement 3 times a week and multivitamins once a week. If calcium is given at irregular intervals, this can result in pyramiding which is sudden growth of the shell. Fresh water should be offered daily. They are likely to defecate in the water bowl.

Please see back for information on hibernation