

African spurred tortoise

(Geochelone Sulcata)

CARE SHEET

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The African spurred tortoise is the 3rd largest tortoise in the world. Sulcatas are very large, heavily built tortoises and can grow to 3 feet in length up to 200 pounds. They originate in the Sahara desert of central Africa. The climate is hot and dry which makes the Sulcata well suited to our desert.

Sulcatas are enthusiastic diggers and can do severe damage to your yard. They are voracious eaters that will literally eat anything they can get to. When considering owning this tortoise you need to be sure you have a large, secure area capable of supporting a lot of grass and plants. A 200 square feet area should be the minimum space for one tortoise.

HABITAT

The habitat needs to be in a dry area with shade in some part of the habitat at all times. A burrow needs to be created for the tortoise to retreat to in order to regulate their body temperature. The perimeter of the habitat must be solid (wood or concrete block) to create a visual barrier. A water source should be available at all times.

Most important, the Sulcata does not hibernate and must be kept warm in the cold winter months. You must have a way to keep the tortoises at 55 degrees or warmer. A house can be built that will accommodate a heat source such as a 250W heat lamp. The lamp must be high enough so as to not burn the tortoise. A lamp mounted to a 4 foot high ceiling works well. The floor of the house should be dirt. Add a layer of hay or straw on the floor for extra warmth. Do not heat the tortoise from the bottom.

FEEDING

Fiber is one of the most important parts of the Sulcata's diet, therefore grasses, leaves, alfalfa and hay should make up the bulk of their diet. Avoid feeding produce except as an occasional treat. A diet of mostly produce can cause poor health, loose stools and colic in your tortoise. Feed the following and your tortoise will be healthy and happy:

- Bales of Alfalfa or Timothy hay
- Any grasses that are free of fertilizer or pesticide
- Mulberry, fig and citrus tree leaves
- Hibiscus, Ruellia, Roses (leaves and flowers)
- Spineless prickly pear cactus pads and fruit.

For the occasional produce, feed dark green leaf vegetables, carrots and avoid feeding any fruit and animal fat, including any dog food (dry or canned).

QUESTIONS

There are no stupid questions. It's better to be safe than sorry. If there is anything you are not sure of, please call **Wayne @ 480-330-0180** with any questions.