

ARE YOU A GOOD MATCH FOR THIS TORTOISE?

Sulcatas get big. They get big fast. Sulcatas are not appropriate pets for anyone living in a house without a yard. They are completely unsuited for anyone living in an apartment.

Many buyers of large reptiles believe that they can keep them for a few years until they get "too big" and then sell them or give them to a zoo. Most zoos aren't interested in your animals – they have enough of their own and have their own sources.

Those of us involved in reptile rescue are getting calls to take sulcata tortoises that have outgrown their owner's yard. There are many wonderful tortoises out there more suited to smaller homes and yards, tortoises that do not require kidney belts and hernia repair to pick up and move them, and who in turn will not redecorate your house and yard.

If you do not already have a sulcata, please make your decision very carefully. Check with your local herpetological or turtle and tortoise societies and find out if anyone in your area has adult sulcatas and seek the opportunity to meet the owners and their tortoises. While many people can visualize just how long 24 inches is and how much 100 pounds weighs, actually seeing a tortoise that size is a breathtaking--and sobering--sight.

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE PURCHASING A SULCATA

These questions are not to discourage tortoise ownership. They are meant to educate you so that you can choose the right turtle or tortoise for your lifestyle.

Sulcatas are not native to the United States. They are native to Africa and require warm temperatures and low humidity. There are very few places in the United States where this environment exists and does not have to be reproduced artificially. The southwest deserts are perfect. Creating this environment is costly and often difficult. Offering the animal less is unfair to the animal. Not providing the animal with the proper nutrition or room to roam, dig and be a tortoise year round is unfair.



Here are the questions:

1. How old are you? The older you get the harder it will be to handle these large tortoises that will probably weigh 100 pounds or more.

2. Are you married?

a. Does your spouse support your decision to keep a sulcata?

b. Would your spouse choose to keep a sulcata if you hadn't initiated the idea?

5. Do you have someone in your life that is willing and prepared to take on the responsibility of a sulcata if you can no longer take care of it?

6. Do you own a dog? Dogs and tortoises do not mix. Dogs can kill young sulcatas by mistaking them for toys. The two must be separated.

7. Do you know a vet who has even treated a large sulcata? Many veterinarians are not experienced in treating reptiles. You must find a good reptile veterinarian to care for your tortoises.

8. Do you own or lease a home on a large lot? Sulcatas need a lot of space and you will probably want to isolate them to a section of your yard due to their destructive nature.

9. How important is your landscape to you? Sulcatas will re-arrange your yard – probably not exactly as you would!

10. Are you prepared to provide year round care for your sulcata with no break for hibernation? They will need a heated area in the cold months and after a few years you will not want them in the house.

11. What is the yearly average temperature where you live? Hot and dry is the best. Cold and damp is not satisfactory.