

Hermann's Tortoises - *Testudo hermanni* - Darrell Senneke
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This care sheet is intended only to cover the general care of this species. Further research to best develop a maintenance plan for whichever species you are caring for is essential.

HOUSING HERMANN'S INDOORS - The most useful form of indoor accommodation for Hermann's Tortoises consists of a "turtle table". To all appearances this looks like a bookshelf unit flipped onto its back. A reasonable size for a hatchling is 2 foot by 3 foot, (60 cm by 90 cm). As the animal grows the size of this habitat should be increased. For an adult Hermann's tortoise the indoor habitat should be at least 4 foot by 2 foot, (120 cm by 60 cm). Into the bottom of this "turtle table" holes can be cut to allow for the sinking of food, water and eventually nesting containers flush with the surface for easier animal access.

The water dish in the habitat should be large enough to allow the tortoise to soak in it if it wishes - it must also be shallow enough to protect from drowning. As a substrate in the dry portion of the environment a mixture of topsoil and children's play sand or cypress bark works well.

In one corner of the environment a hardware store reflector clip light lamp should be positioned to provide artificial basking facilities. This should be positioned to provide a basking spot of 95 degrees F or so (35 degrees C) in that section of the habitat. The habitat should also be equipped with a full spectrum fluorescent light to provide for UVB. A UVB source is necessary for Vitamin D3 syntheses (needed in calcium metabolism). If preferred to this lighting arrangement a Mercury vapor bulb may be used that fulfills all requirements. There should be a hide box located in the corner away from the basking spot to allow the animal a cool dim retreat.

OUTDOOR HOUSING - Predator proof outdoor habitats offer many advantages over indoor accommodations and should seriously be considered as an option during warm weather.

DIET - A high fiber, low protein and calcium rich diet will ensure good digestive tract function and smooth growth. *Testudo hermanni* fed on cat or dog foods frequently die from renal failure or from impacted bladder stones of solidified urates. Avoid over reliance upon 'supermarket' greens and fruits, which typically contain inadequate fiber levels, excessive pesticide residues and are too rich in sugar. While they need not be totally avoided, fruits should be given very sparingly to this species as the high sugar foods can cause diarrhea.



- Diet: Leafy greens (dandelions, clover, endive etc.)

Additional calcium supplementation is essential. Powdered calcium can be sprinkled all foods. It is suggested that one use calcium supplemented with vitamin D3 if the animal is being maintained indoors and calcium without D3 if it is outdoors. Provision of a cuttlefish bone, which can be gnawed if desired, is also recommended.

This species hibernates in nature. After careful research of methods used to safely do this, hibernation facilities should be provided for the continued health and well being of the tortoise.

It should be noted that turtle and tortoise care research is ongoing. As new information becomes available we share this on the World Chelonian Trust web site at www.chelonia.org. Serious keepers find it to be a benefit to have the support of others who keep these species. Care is discussed in our free online email community, which may be joined from the web address above. Please contact us about the many benefits of becoming a member of the World Chelonian Trust.

World Chelonian Trust
www.chelonia.org
685 Bridge Street Plaza PMB# 292
Owatonna, MN
55060