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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Aldabra Giant Tortoise

Aldabrachelys gigantea

Aldabrachelys gigantea is one of the largest land tortoises in the world: females reach about 90 cm and nearly 160 kg, males about 120 cm and 250 kg, and the species lives for more than 100 years. It comes from Aldabra Atoll in the Indian Ocean. An adult needs a heated barn and a large, secure outdoor paddock, so the species is only for keepers who can provide both.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Testudo gigantea; Testudo elephantina; Testudo ponderosa; Testudo sumeirei; Testudo gouffei; Dipsochelys dussumieri*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-125 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**80-100 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**800 × 400 × 80 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Basking spot	**29-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-23 °C**
Humidity	**55-65%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**In groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**180-240 months**
Clutch size	**9-25 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**98-148 days** at 27-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Not Evaluated (NE)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little has been published about keeping *Aldabrachelys gigantea* outside zoos.
TEMPERATURE	By day the barn should be 24-28 °C with a basking spot of 29-32 °C under a heat lamp, and at night 18-23 °C; the night must not fall below 18 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be 55-65% for adults, while young animals need 70-80%. A low, wide, non-slip bowl of clean water must be available at all times, because animals in captivity drink a lot.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and lives in full sun.
FEEDING	The diet is almost entirely plants: grass, herbs, leaves, twigs and, in smaller amounts, fruit.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is social and curious and quickly learns to recognise its keeper. An adult is so heavy and strong that it knocks over small trees and shrubs, and flimsy fences will not hold it.
NATIVE RANGE	Seychelles.