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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

African Spurred Tortoise

Centrochelys sulcata

Centrochelys sulcata is the largest tortoise on the African mainland: the shell reaches 50-85 cm, the weight up to 90 kg, and the animal can live for 50-80 years. The young are small but grow fast, and adults require a heated room of more than 20 m² in winter, a large outdoor enclosure in summer and a keeper who can carry the responsibility for decades.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Geochelone sulcata; Testudo sulcata*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**50-85 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**30,000-90,000 g**
Lifespan	**50-80 years**
Active	**By day and at dusk**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and savanna**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**640 × 320 × 120 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-32 °C**
Basking spot	**38-41 °C**
Temperature, night	**21-23 °C**
Humidity	**40-80%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 4
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**Singly or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**120-180 months**
Clutch size	**15-40 eggs**
Clutches per year	**2-3**
Incubation	**90-120 days** at 30-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Endangered (EN)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Space is the first thing to settle. A widely used minimum rule for tortoises is a length of 8 times and a width of 4 times the shell length of the largest animal.
TEMPERATURE	The air temperature should be 24-32 °C by day, with a basking spot of 38-41 °C for young animals, and 21-23 °C at night.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Although the species comes from a dry area, young animals must not be kept completely dry: in the wild the young hatch in the rainy season and spend a lot of time in humid burrows.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	There must always be a large, low and stable bowl of fresh water, dug in so that the animal can get in and out. The water must reach no higher than the animal's knees.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and needs both strong light and UVB (Ferguson zone 4) all year indoors, with a UV index of about 4-6 at the basking spot.
FEEDING	*C. sulcata* is a herbivore and needs a high-fibre, low-protein diet.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is calm and sluggish, but not a pet for handling. The animal is stressed by being lifted, and an adult of 50-90 kg cannot be lifted by one person. Many take food from the hand and enjoy having the shell scratched.
NATIVE RANGE	Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Central African Republic and Cameroon.