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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

African Pancake Tortoise

Malacochersus tornieri

Malacochersus tornieri is a small East African tortoise with an unusually flat, thin and flexible shell. It lives on rocky hills in dry savanna and scrub, where it flees into narrow rock crevices instead of withdrawing into its shell. The shell is 15-18 cm long, the female lays only one egg at a time, and the species is critically endangered in the wild.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Testudo tornieri; Testudo loveridgii*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-18 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**20-30 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Rock-dwelling**
Habitat	**Semi-desert, savanna and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**100 × 60 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-4**
Incubation	**120-185 days** at 28-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix I**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Critically Endangered (CR)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little detailed knowledge exists on the care of *Malacochersus tornieri*, and wild-caught animals are very difficult to acclimatise to captivity.
TEMPERATURE	By day the temperature should be 24-28 °C, and at night 18-22 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be low, 30-50 %. The terrarium should be dry, but a small dish of clean drinking water must always be available. Change the water daily.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Malacochersus tornieri* is diurnal and is most active early and late in the day. UVB is necessary when the animal is kept indoors: Ferguson zone 2, corresponding to a UV index of 2.0-3.0 in part of the terrarium.
FEEDING	The diet is dry and high in fibre. Offer dry grasses, hay and wild herbs such as dandelion, clover and vetch, and include succulents such as aloe and stonecrop.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Malacochersus tornieri* is shy, but active and persistent. It climbs, hides and comes out only when things are quiet. It does not withdraw into its shell, but runs towards the nearest crevice and squeezes in when disturbed.
NATIVE RANGE	Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia.