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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Tent Tortoise

Psammobates tentorius

Psammobates tentorius is a small, domed tortoise from the Karoo and other semi-deserts of south-western Africa. The shell is 11-15 cm long and has a pattern of yellow or orange rays on a dark ground. The species is difficult to keep: it dies easily in damp, cool air and rarely survives long in captivity. It is only for specialists who can give it a sunny, dry and well-drained set-up.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Testudo tentoria; Testudo boettgeri; Testudo oscarboettgeri; Psammobates depressa; Testudo trimeni; Testudo verroxii*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**11-15 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**40-50 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-28 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**12-18 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-3 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**94-198 days** at 28-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Near Threatened (NT)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Almost nothing is known about keeping *Psammobates tentorius*, and the animals rarely survive long away from their habitat. Damp is the most common cause of death in captivity.
TEMPERATURE	By day it should be 22-28 °C in the enclosure and, under a lamp, a basking spot of 32-35 °C, measured on the surface. At night 12-18 °C is suitable.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be low, 30-50%, and the substrate should be dry. Damp is the most common cause of death, so misting is used only in very small amounts, and there must be no damp soil in the enclosure.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and basks a great deal. Sunlight is best, and the animal should be out in the sun as often as the weather allows.
FEEDING	In the wild the species feeds on grasses, sedges and other low herbs and succulents, and it has a preference for flowers.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is shy and retreats under shrubs or digs itself half in. It is highly susceptible to respiratory diseases if mixed with other tortoises, so it is kept alone and must never come into contact with other species.
NATIVE RANGE	South Africa and Namibia.