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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Spur-thighed Tortoise

Testudo graeca

Testudo graeca is a robust tortoise from North Africa, southern Europe and the Middle East with a yellowish brown, domed shell and a horny spur on each thigh. It belongs outdoors in summer, lives on wild herbs and can live to be more than a hundred years old. Whether it should hibernate depends on where the animals come from.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Testudo ibera*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-30 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**50-100 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**200 × 100 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-30 °C**
Basking spot	**32-38 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**4-6 °C** 8-16 weeks
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-7 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-3**
Incubation	**55-85 days** at 26-32 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Testudo graeca belongs outdoors in the summer half of the year and is not at all suited to living in a closed glass terrarium.

TEMPERATURE

By day the temperature should be 22-30 °C, with a basking spot under a heat lamp of 32-38 °C, so that the animal can warm up to at least 30 °C. At night the temperature falls to 15-20 °C, and the heat is switched off.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The species comes from dry climates, and humidity should be moderate: 40-70 %, highest for young animals.

LIGHTING AND UVB

T. graeca is diurnal and needs UVB to produce vitamin D3 and avoid bone disease. Use a T5 tube or a powerful UVB bulb for desert species (Ferguson zone 3, about 10-12 % UVB), mounted 25-40 cm above the animal.

FEEDING

Testudo graeca is exclusively herbivorous, and the diet must be high in fibre, low in protein and rich in calcium.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

The species is robust and curious and can become very tame, but it is not an animal to pick up and cuddle. Handle it only when necessary, and always support under the plastron. Hold it low, so that a fall does not damage the shell.

NATIVE RANGE

Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, North Macedonia and Palestinian Territories.