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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Red-Footed Tortoise

Chelonoidis carbonarius

Chelonoidis carbonarius is a medium-sized, dark tortoise from the savannas and forest edges of South America with red to orange scales on the head and legs. The shell is typically 30-35 cm long, the animal lives for at least 50 years and is one of the most commonly kept tropical tortoises. It needs high humidity and warmth all year and eats plants, fruit and a little animal food.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Chelonoidis carbonaria; Geochelone carbonaria; Testudo carbonaria* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**30-45 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**50-70 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna, dry forest and rainforest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**280 × 140 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-29 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-23 °C**
Humidity	**70-90%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects, fruit, plants and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**2-7 eggs**
Incubation	**105-200 days** at 28-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	*Chelonoidis carbonarius* is an active tortoise that uses all the space it is given. It lives on the ground, so floor area is more important than height.
TEMPERATURE	Indoors there must be a gradient. The air temperature is 24-29 °C by day, and the basking spot under the heat lamp is 32-35 °C, measured on the surface itself.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species comes from a warm and humid climate and needs high humidity: 70-90 %, with short peaks towards 100 %.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*C. carbonarius* is diurnal and needs UVB when it is not in direct sun. Measure a UV index of 2.0-3.0 at the basking spot (Ferguson zone 2).
FEEDING	*C. carbonarius* is an omnivore and in the wild eats plants, flowers, fruit, fungi and a little animal food. In captivity a split of about 90 % plant material and 10 % animal food works.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is inquisitive, active and fairly calm. It gets to know its keeper, readily comes over when there is food and takes food from a hand or tweezers.
NATIVE RANGE	Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina and Trinidad & Tobago.