

# Sulcata Tortoise Care Sheet

## Introduction

Sulcata tortoises, also known as African spurred tortoises, are one of the largest tortoise species. They can weigh over 200 pounds and live for more than 100 years! Taking care of a Sulcata tortoise is a big responsibility, but with the right information, you can help your tortoise live a happy and healthy life.

## Habitat

### Outdoor Enclosure

- **Size:** If you live in a warm climate, it's best to keep your Sulcata outside in a secure pen. The enclosure should be at least 10 feet by 10 feet, but bigger is always better!
- **Fencing:** Use sturdy fencing that is at least 2 feet tall because Sulcata tortoises are great diggers.
- **Sunshine:** They need plenty of sunlight. Make sure the enclosure has areas where they can bask in the sun.
- **Shelter:** Provide a shaded area and a small house or hiding spot for them to rest in when it's hot.

### Indoor Habitat

- If you live in a colder area, you can keep your Sulcata indoors when it's too cold outside.
- Use a large terrarium or a large plastic storage bin.
- Provide a heat lamp to keep the temperature around 80-90°F.
- Make sure there's enough space for them to move around and explore.

## Temperature and Lighting

- **Basking Spot:** Create a basking area with a heat lamp that reaches 95-100°F.
- **Cool Area:** Provide a cooler area in the habitat, around 70-80°F.
- **UVB Light:** If indoors, use a UVB light to help your tortoise absorb calcium. This is important for their shell and bones.

## Diet

Sulcata tortoises are herbivores, which means they eat plants. Here's what to feed them:

- **Grass Hay:** Timothy hay or Bermuda grass hay should make up the bulk of their diet. It helps with digestion and keeps their shells healthy.
- **Fresh Greens:** Offer dark, leafy greens like collard greens, dandelion greens, and romaine lettuce.

- **Vegetables:** You can give them small amounts of carrots, squash, and bell peppers.
- **Fruits:** Treat them with fruits like strawberries or melons, but only in small amounts because they are high in sugar.

## Water

- Always provide fresh water. A shallow dish is best so your tortoise can easily access it.
- They may soak in their water dish, which is normal!

## Handling and Socialization

- **Gentle Handling:** When you pick up your tortoise, support their body well. Always be gentle!
- **Short Sessions:** Keep handling sessions short, especially when they are young. Let them explore their surroundings but always supervise.

## Health and Behavior

### Signs of a Healthy Tortoise

- **Active:** Your tortoise should be alert and active, especially in warmer weather.
- **Eating Well:** A healthy tortoise has a good appetite.
- **Clear Eyes:** Their eyes should be clear and bright, not cloudy or sunken.

### Common Health Issues

- **Shell Problems:** A soft or damaged shell can be a sign of illness. If you notice anything unusual, see a vet who specializes in reptiles.
- **Respiratory Issues:** Watch for coughing or wheezing. If your tortoise is having trouble breathing, it needs immediate veterinary attention.

## Exercise and Enrichment

- **Explore:** Sulcata tortoises love to roam and dig! Give them space to explore and dig in their enclosure.
- **Hiding Spots:** Create tunnels or hideaways using cardboard boxes or logs for them to explore.
- **Safe Plants:** You can plant safe grasses and weeds in their pen for them to munch on and explore.

## Conclusion

Caring for a Sulcata tortoise is a long-term commitment that requires time, effort, and love. By following these care guidelines, you can ensure your tortoise lives a healthy and happy life. Remember, if you ever have questions, it's okay to ask an adult or a veterinarian who knows about reptiles!

Enjoy your journey as a tortoise owner, and have fun watching your Sulcata grow and thrive!

