

San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society
Hermann's Tortoise Care Sheet



Average Size: 6" to 8"

Lifespan: 75+ years

Description

The head is brown to black, with fine scales. The forelegs similarly possess fine scales. The limbs generally have five claws, which are darkly colored at their base. The hindlegs are noticeably thicker than the forelegs, almost plump. The particularly strong tail ends in a spike, which may be very large in older male specimens. Females have noticeably smaller tailspikes, which are slightly bent toward the body.

Outdoors

In order to keep Hermann's tortoise in a temperate climate, the pen must be placed in a very sunny location. The most important part of the pen is a tortoise house that they can use as a shelter. This should be a weatherproof box with an openable roof and an entry way for the animals. The floor should consist of soil as in the wild to enable burying and thermoregulation. Their life pattern in captivity is the same as in the wild. They leave the house in the early morning to warm themselves and then begin to eat. They should be provided with a wide range of edible materials. They eat for about an hour before returning to the house. In the late afternoon, they come out again for a second meal.

Hermann's tortoises are largely vegetarian, and in the wild are known to feed on weeds and grasses, leguminous plants (beans, clovers, and wild lupines) and flowers, as well as snails, slugs, and wild fruits. In captivity they will eat a wide range of similar foods. They have enormous appetites. Expect them to subsist on a diet that includes weeds, grass, hibiscus flowers, endive, romaine, dandelion, zucchini, yellow squash, snails, slugs, pill bugs, and a variety of seasonal vegetables and fruits.

They can be kept outdoors approximately from mid-March to the end of October. The pen should normally be constructed from natural stones. The tortoise house must be relatively large, some 3 ft. x 3+ ft. (14 ft³) in size. It should be made of wood and have no floor to enable the tortoise to thermoregulate its own body temperature via burying itself. Other materials will produce a house that is too hot or too cold. There should be a heat lamp operated by thermostatic control.

Indoors

Hatchlings and young specimens can be kept indoors. Although a vivarium is sometimes offered as suitable accommodation, the humidity in such an enclosure can reach levels much higher than commonly found in the wild, leading to respiratory problems. A clamp lamp should be fastened overhead so that a 40 to 60-watt reflector bulb is some 8 inches above the level of the gravel of the enclosure. The bulb is turned on in the morning so that the animals can bask and then feed, a source of UVB light must also be provided, in the form of a HighUV fluorescent tube, or similar. The animals should also regularly be put into sunlight in the summer outdoors to provide them with necessary ultraviolet radiation. Placing a tortoise on a window sill in winter will not provide the required level of UVB, as glass will filter out UVB.

The animals must be allowed to self regulate their temperature. This can be achieved by providing a temperature gradient in the enclosure, ranging from around 92 °F at the hot end to 68 °F at the cool end. The animal will then choose a position in the enclosure to reach its desired temperature

Hibernation

In nature, the animals dig their nightly shelters out and spend the relatively mild Mediterranean winters there. During this time, the heart rate and breathing rate drop notably. Domestic animals can be kept in the basement in a roomy rodent-proof box with a thick layer of dry leaves. The temperature should be around 45 degrees F. As an alternative, the box can be stored in a refrigerator. For this method to be used, the fridge should be in regular day to day use, to permit air flow. During hibernation, it is vital that the ambient temperature not fall below 35 degrees F. Full-grown specimens may sleep 4–5 months at a time. Hermann's should be in good health to hibernate. Your veterinarian should give your tortoise a checkup and provide you guidance in preparing for the colder months.

Female (short, narrow tail)



Male (Longer, thick tail)



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