About California Desert Tortoise Permits...

Your California Desert Tortoise requires a Permit!

A desert tortoise may be legally possessed in California only under the authority of a permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The department may issue a permit for the possession of a desert tortoise provided the tortoise was legally acquired.

To request a DESERT TORTOISE PERMIT APPLICATION form, contact the Society or write to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife:

Postal Address:

   CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE
   License and Revenue Branch
   3211 S Street
   Sacramento, CA 95816
San Diego Turtle & Tortoise Society has a collection of these permit applications available at our monthly meetings and at our annual July Show.

Fish and Wildlife will send you a numbered tag to affix to your tortoise. The tag can be placed at the rear end of the animal on the carapace or plastron, or on the inside of the shell behind one of the back legs. Unfortunately the tags can wear out within a few years. Because there is less wear and tear, placing the tag on the inside of the shell seems to work best. However, this site may not be accessible in smaller tortoises. SDTTS Care Coordinators can help you with your tagging decisions.

The law requires that the tag be attached to the tortoise that it was issued for at all times. Some owners wait until the animals are 2-3 years old before registering them. Owners must use their judgment as to best time and place to put the tag. Remember, a healthy juvenile tortoise will put on significant growth each year. Because growth occurs at the edges of the scutes, a tag that overlaps the edge of a scute may loosen and fall off. If a tag becomes lost or wears out, fill out a new permit application form if needed. Be sure to state on the form that this is a request for a replacement tag and provide the number of the old tag.

Reasons for obtaining a permit: There are several good reasons for obtaining a permit and tagging your tortoise. First, it is against the law to keep a desert tortoise without having a permit, and the permit tag must be fixed to the tortoise. On several occasions California Department of Fish and Wildlife Officers have been forced to confiscate tortoises that have been kept without permits or lacking tags. Second, the permit offers a simple way to establish legal proof of custody should the animal wander away from its home and get turned into an Animal Control or Humane Society facility. Many Animal Control and Humane Societies will not turn over desert tortoises without evidence of a permit, and there have been several instances where tortoise owners were unable to reclaim their pets. Additionally, a found tortoise's owner can be traced by Animal Rescues from the DFW tag number.

**Important legal details...**

- Breeding of captive tortoises is not authorized in California. ALWAYS keep genders separated. If the gender of a tortoise is unknown, and you have more than one, you must keep them separated to prevent accidental breeding.
- It is illegal to take tortoises from the wild. The penalty for doing so can be up to $5,000 and one year in jail.
- No tortoise that has been in human possession shall be released into the wild.

Desert Tortoise care sheets are on our website: [www.sdturtle.org/care-sheets](http://www.sdturtle.org/care-sheets)