

KEEPING TROPICAL RAINFOREST TORTOISE SPECIES

SPECIES AVAILABLE,

Red Footed Tortoises *Geochelone carbonaria*
Yellow Footed Tortoises *Geochelone denticulata*
Elongated Tortoises *Indotestudo elongate*
Bells Hinge Back Tortoises *Kinixys belliana*
Homes Hinge Back Tortoise *Kinixys homeana*
Burmese Brown Tortoises *Manouria emys*

ORIGINS,

All the above species originate from lush tropical jungle habitats. Some such as the Red foot and Bells hingeback tortoises are found living on the fringes of rain forests, but others such as Yellow foots live deep within it.

All of the above animals will require constant warm humid conditions with regular access to water to thrive.

ADULT SIZES AND LIFE SPAN.

Red Foot Tortoises grow very rapidly and can attain lengths of 300-500mm (12-20 in)

Yellow Foot Tortoises can grow pretty large reaching 700-800mm (28- 32in)

Elongated Tortoise grow between 200- 270mm (8- 10 in)

Bells Hingeback Tortoises grow between 200- 220mm (8in)

Homes Hingeback Tortoises grow between 200- 210mm (8in)

Burmese Brown Tortoises grow up to 600mm (24in)

All of the above species have the potential to live very long lives in captivity. Most will easily reach 30- 50 years, although species such as Yellow Foots and Burmese Browns could probably do twice that.

Please consider this fact before buying a tortoise as they are a long term commitment..

DIET AND FEEDING.

All rain forest tortoises are omnivorous, which means they eat both animal and vegetable matter. All the above species predominantly eat fresh green leaf material with the addition of fallen fruits, flowers, insects, mollusc's and carrion.

In captivity their diets can easily be provided. It should be stressed that variety is essential to keep these animals in tip top condition, so always provide a good range of different food stuffs for your pets.

A good basic daily diet for these animals would be a variety of mixed salad greens and edible weeds. We regularly use a mixture of watercress, lambs ear lettuce, dandelion leaves and flowers, nasturcium leaves and flowers, rose petals and curly kale. This is roughly chopped and mixed together with a good calcium vitamin supplement such as vetark's Nutrobal.

Once to twice per week we replace the leaf material with a mixture of soft fruits, such as: apple, cucumber, tomato, water melon, grapes, pear, plum, banana, strawberry, apricot etc... Again these are roughly chopped and mixed together with a good vitamin supplement such as beaphurs Vionate.

Once to twice per week we also add a protein source to there diet such as soya beans, peas, mushrooms, tortoise pellets, carp pellets, soaked dry cat or dog food, cooked chicken or defrosted pinkie or fluff mice. These tortoises do not need excessive

amounts of protein in their diet, so one small feed is all that is required. We would use a pink mouse or small piece of cooked chicken as a treat..

Vitamin and mineral supplementation is essential for long term good health. Calcium (calcium carbonate) is remarkably important and should be used as a daily supplement for all captive tortoises.

Water should be available at all times and rainforest species love to bathe, so water bowls must be large enough to enable animals to do so.

HOUSING.

All of these tortoises will need to be kept indoors for most of their lives in captivity. They will need spacious accommodation with good heating and adequate lighting. They also require an interesting environment in which to live with access to deep substrates to burrow, areas to hide, areas to sun bathe and areas to soak in warm shallow water.

Juveniles and smaller tortoises should be maintained in large vivarium type set up's, don't use tortoise table type setups unless you can place the table in a warm room with constant temperatures of 24- 26c.

The vivarium should be at least 120cm long x 60cm x 60cm. Heating can be provided in the form of a 150watt ceramic heater connected to a habistat dimmer stat set at 26c. Lighting can be provided in the form of a 5.0 uvb florescent strip lamp and a 25- 40 watt white spot lamp for basking. Rain forest tortoises are not always fond of very bright light so always provide plenty of hides to escape it if they wish. The ceramic heater should stay on 24/7, whereas the strip and spot light should be on 12 hours and off 12 hours per day.

A deep damp substrate should be provided to maintain adequate humidity and to provide areas to burrow. Tortoises are great burrowers and should always be given access to do so as it encourages natural behaviour and keeps their skin and shell in good condition.

Create an interesting environment with artificial plants, logs and flat stones. This by far the best way to keep your pet mentally stimulated, something often forgotten when keeping reptiles.

Regular handling of your pet will keep it friendly and allow you to check it over for any health issues, also allow your pet some time to exercise and maybe a long soak in some lukewarm clean water on a daily basis will be of great benefit.

HIBERNATION.

None of the above species can hibernate.

FURTHER INFORMATION.

Joining local tortoise and reptile groups is a good idea, giving you access to people who may have kept tropical tortoises for many years. Local groups inc:

The Norfolk and Coe Tortoise club. tortoiseclub.org

The Suffolk Tortoise club 01284 747000

Further info can be obtained from other groups such as:

The tortoise trust. Tortoisetrust.org