

BEGINNERS INFORMATION GUIDE - MEDITERRANEAN HATCHLINGS

ESSENTIAL - BASIC KIT LIST

- All in one – Mercury Vapour Bulb - UVB / heat e.g 125 watts Solar Glo / 100 watt Acadia
- Ceramic clamp lamp to hold the bulb. e.g Exo terra medium glo lamp
- Time clock set to 10–12 hours per day.
- 2ft x 2.5ft poly box for hibernation
- Temp probe (ideally max min).
- Basic digital scales which weigh in increments of 1g,
- Nutrobal or Reptavite vitamin and calcium supplement
- Washing up bowl or margarine tub (depending on tort size).
- Tamodine (Vetark) wash, (small drop in water and brush clean once a week. Rinse with water)
- Tooth brush for cleaning tortoise in corners ideal!
- Selection of edible garden plants / tortoise seed mix,
- Maybe a book. Andy and Nadine Highfield Beginners guide to keeping med torts (Amazon)

INITIAL CARE

First 10 days bath tortoise everyday in luke warm water for 15 – 20 minutes. This encourages tortoise to be active and not become dehydrated from the stress of a new environment. Bath 2 -3 times a week after this ideally before feeding to raise temp and in turn encourage feeding.

COMMON SENSE

Enjoy observing your tortoise, but also ask yourself questions.

- If tortoise hides in a corner – Is tortoise too cold?
- If tortoise refuses to eat – Is tortoise cold or show unusual signs, which mean it may be ill?
- If tortoise's shell begins to ridge or appear very plastic looking – Is tortoise growing too fast or not getting enough access to outdoors and natural sunlight? Do I need to cut back on meals?
- Tortoise found upside down – do I need to change something in the tortoise setup?

If unsure consult a knowledgeable vet, specialist forum or come along to tortoise club meeting.

INDOOR SETUP

- Keep tortoise on 2:1 soil:sand mix around 5-6 inches deep. Keep soil loose to allow tortoise to burrow. Give access to hides with pieces of wood. Moisten every few days with a medium jug of water. Decoration with edible plants can also be good.
- Heat lamp - Aim to have lamp on between 8 – 12 hours a day. Ideally when you are around to make sure tortoise does not turn on back.
- Keep area under lamp simple to avoid overturned tortoises from overheating under lamp.
- Cover indoor and outdoor tray/run with mesh if there is a risk of dogs, cats, mice or rats. Bring tortoise in overnight and keep at room temperate in bad weather.
- Maintain a moist/damp sand soil substrate by spraying water and pouring water from a jug every few days or everyday if required.
- Clear away dried up weeds, poo pick and clean water bowl with Tamodine as required. Do a full substrate change every 3 months.

FEEDING

- Feed tortoise on slate or similar to avoid ingestion of substrate to avoid internal blockage.
- Give access to lots of calcium supplement in block, granules and by light dusting of Nutrobal / reptavite on every meal (tropical species also require vionate) In summer months limestone flour can also be used on alternative days.
- Give a small handful of weeds, edible plants and access to fresh water every day.
- **Give your tortoise as much variety as possible.** You can find lot of lists available online or through your local club **TOP TIP:** use www.tortoisetable.co.uk & 'Google Image' internet tool to expand your knowledge of the many edible plants which are good for tortoises to eat. Online directory
- Give access to a shallow bowl of calcium granules and chalk lump in run. Also ensure there is access to shallow water dishes, moist substrate sand/ soil substrate and regular baths to avoid internal bladder or bowel blockages.

OUTDOORS

- Allow your tortoise access to a safe outdoor enclosure where ever possible, as natural sunlight is the best way for a tortoise to obtain vital vitamin D3 from the sun. In summer this should be at least 9am till 5.00pm.
- Setup design help can be found online with websites mentioned below. Initially a solid edged rabbit ark can work well as long as on level soil and not all grass and in a sunny spot. A cold frame or similar will also be required.
- The edge of any tortoise setup must be solid in construction. A tortoise will spend all day trying to escape through glass or mesh. Causing stress and often harm to themselves in the process. Whether metal, wood or brick perimeters must be double the length of the tortoise. Corners should ideally be covered to prevent escape through climbing. Always remember not to place climbing aids such as pots close to the edge of open topped runs.
- Ideally you should aim to buy a cold frame or green house and create a run in a sunny spot within your garden.
- Pay particular attention to 10 dos and don't care sheets and aim to read as much as possible about new pet through websites and books suggested. If you still have questions please don't hesitate to contact your local club, knowledgeable tortoise vet or online forum for further help.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

- www.tortoiseclub.org – Care sheets and Norfolk based club meetings
- www.thetortoisetable.co.uk – Online photo dictionary of tortoise food and forum
- www.tlady.clara.net – user friendly information – great printable edible tortoise weeds guide
- www.shelledwarriors.co.uk - online forum
- www.tortoisetrust.org – Largest UK organization– Good for care sheets, articles and books

LOCAL NORFOLK BASED VETS – WITH EXPERIENCE IN TORTOISES – (others upon request)

- UPLAND WAY VETS - Attleborough and Diss, Tel: 01379 642865 www.uplandswayvets.co.uk/
- TERRINGTON VETS – near Kings Lynn, Tel: 01553 828423 www.terringtonvets.co.uk
- ALL CREATURES VETS – Norwich, Tel: 01603 898984 www.allcreatureshealthcare.co.uk

PET INSURANCE

If you only have one or two tortoises well worth considering

Happy Tortoise Keeping!