



CARE SHEET

Africa Spurred (Sulcata) Tortoise *Centrochelys sulcata*

The African Spurred Tortoise is sometimes known as the Sulcata Tortoise and is the largest tortoise species found in Africa and the third largest species in the world, normally growing to between 24 – 30 inches, and around 36 - 50 Kg in weight. The measurement is the carapace length (back shell) as measured in a straight line (not curved over the apex of the carapace).

They are a high domed carapaced species and young specimens have light brown to ivory skin and carapaces.



Housing

Centrochelys sulcata are a terrestrial species of tortoise which live on the southern edge of the Sahara desert in northern Africa. A young specimen requires an enclosure 2 feet x 3 feet with walls in excess of 12 inches to prevent climbing and escape. An adult will require a minimum of 6 feet x 12 feet, a heated greenhouse or shed could be ideal. Substrate should be topsoil, with grass clippings etc. A water dish is required to drink from, but never so large and deep as the tortoise can't climb out or could drown.

A basking area is required so that the animals can regulate their temperature and UV light absorption. The warm end of the enclosure should be around 35°C the cool end should be around 25°C

A hide, or several, are required around the enclosure to make the tortoise feel secure. Damp moss in at least one of them allows the tortoise to choose its own humidity levels. Rolling hills are beneficial for the tortoises to build leg strength and choose a basking site.

Make no mistake, this species will grow massive! It will be able to roam your garden in the summer, but you will need to provide accommodation over winter that is warm and spacious.

This species DOES NOT hibernate, and this should not be attempted.

Heat and light

UVB and UVA (heat) are both required to maintain correct internal temperatures and synthesis of vitamin D3 and calcium. UVB can be achieved using screw in bulb type UVB lamps or the longer T8 tubes. A UVB of 5% (5.0) – to 10% (10.0) should be provide. Replace UVB bulbs at least every 12 months. A ceramic heat emitter or normal basking bulb can provide UVA and heat. Wattage depends on distance from basking area. The basking area should be 35°C under the heat lamp. Avoid coloured bulbs and use only those closest to the natural spectrum. The lights should be set to a timer to provide 10-12 hours of light per day during natural hours. If the enclosure gets cold at night a ceramic heat emitter or heat mats can keep the temperature above 18°C

Diet

Centrochelys sulcata are a grazing species, and require grasses and fibrous plant materials. In captivity their main part of their diet will consist of greens such as red and green lettuce (not spinach or iceberg) turnip greens, and weeds like dandelion and plantain. Fruit should be offered only rarely and form no more than 5% of the overall diet. A piece of cuttlebone should be provided at all times for calcium and to keep the beak trim. Protein items such as earthworms and pinkie mice should not be offered.

This guide is meant to be a quick reference/starter guide and does not replace more in-depth research on this species. Always ensure that you know the correct care needs for your animal.

Written by Dudley Pinson ©The Turtle Emporium 2020