



CARE SHEET

Burmese Mountain or Asian Forest Tortoise *Manouria emys (emys and phayrei)*



Manouria emys are a species of mountain dwelling tortoise from Thailand, Malaysia, Sumatra and Bourneo. They are the largest species of tortoise in Asia and consist of two subspecies – *emys emys* (Burmese Black Tortoise) and *emys pharei* (Burmese Black Tortoise).

As the name suggest these tortoises can vary from a light brown to an almost black colour over their entire carapace and skin area. The legs are scaly and rough and this has earned them their other name the Six-Legged Tortoise.

A carapace of around 50cm long can be expected with a weight of over 3kg which puts them in the top five largest tortoises in the world.

Housing

M. emys are a mountain forest dwelling species of tortoise. They mainly like to roam the forest floor foraging and digging for food in the leaf litter. They are accomplished climbers and will make short work of obstacles placed in their way. They love to wallow in shallow pools and enjoy a moist habitat. In a captive habitat they should be provided with an enclosure 4 x 8 times their length as a minimum and a part of the enclosure should consist of a pool deep enough to stand up in, but easy to get in and out of. I find the glass terrariums available on the market are great for these humidity loving species as they don't rot and hold the water in as well as being easy to clean.

Substrate should be a moisture holding substance like coir and bark mix deep enough to dig and bury in, humidity should be kept high around 60%.

Although not a highly basking species of tortoise an area is required so that the animals can rest and dry off completely. They also use this area to regulate their temperature and UV light absorption. You should try to replicate the shaded forest floor by providing real or fake plants and UVB around the 5% or 5.0 mark



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Heat and light

Asian Forest Tortoises actually prefer a cooler environment than most species of tortoise and I don't provide a heat lamp as such. I use the compact UVB only lights which I find, in a normally heated room, to be sufficient. Ambient temperature should be in the range of 18 - 25°C. Night temperatures can drop as low as 15°C.

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 T5 tubes. A UVB of 5% (5.0) – to 10% (10.0) should be provided, depending on the height of the bulb from the substrate. 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 approximately 26°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.

Water Quality

Tortoises are dirty animals and leave a lot of waste by leftover food and faecal matter and they WILL defecate in the water. Prepare to change the water often or have permanent filtration in the pool.

Diet

M.emys are an omnivorous species, eating mainly vegetation such as red and green lettuce (not spinach or iceberg) and fruit like mango and banana. They are unusual in tortoises in that they enjoy protein items like live food and mince, especially as young animals. I offer them the same dinner balls I make for my box turtles as treats. Remember to remove anything uneaten to prevent it rotting in the warm humid environment and encouraging fungus and disease. Variation is key and a piece of cuttlebone should be provided at all times for calcium and to keep the beak trim.

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.

