

Arid Tortoise Care: The Complete Recovery Standard

Russian, Hermann's, and Greek Tortoises

1. The Enclosure: Space & Security

Adults require at least a **4x2ft footprint** (minimum). Use a tortoise table (open-top enclosure) to ensure excellent air circulation. Ensure walls are high and escape-proof. Use 4–6 inches of clean, moisture-retaining substrate like an organic topsoil/play sand mix to allow for natural burrowing behavior.

2. Thermal Gradient: The "Sun-Bather"

Basking spot: 95–100°F. Cool side: 70–75°F. Use a thermostat with **all** heat sources. A high-quality **linear UVB tube** (T5 HO, 10.0 or 12%) is mandatory; replace every 6–12 months to ensure proper D3 synthesis.

3. Nutrition: High Fiber / Low Sugar

The diet should be 90% leafy greens, grasses, and weeds (Dandelion greens, endive, escarole, collard greens, and dried orchard grass/Timothy hay). **Avoid:** Fruit, sugary vegetables, and animal protein, as these cause severe health issues like pyramiding.

THE REALITY CHECK: Arid tortoises are a 50–70 year commitment. They are not 'starter pets' and they require a massive amount of space and specific lighting. If you are not prepared to plan for this animal's care for the next half-century, do not adopt.

4. Health: Recovery Red Flags

- **Pyramiding:** Raised scutes are a sign of improper diet/dry conditions—this is permanent.
- **Respiratory Infection:** Bubbling at the nose, wheezing, or loss of appetite.
- **Soft Shell:** Indicates Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) from poor UVB/calcium.

5. Enrichment & Sustainability

Sustainability tip: Use large, shallow plastic bins or cut-down storage totes as deep soaking stations for 1–2 times a week hydration.

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