

Sulcata Tortoise Care: The Complete Recovery Standard

1. The Enclosure: The "Giant" Requirement

Juveniles can start in a 4x2ft indoor enclosure, but they grow rapidly. Adults **require** a large, secure outdoor enclosure (hundreds of square feet) with a climate-controlled "tortoise shed" for the winter. They are powerful, destructive "bulldozers"—wooden fences will not hold them.

2. Thermal Gradient & UVB

Basking spot: 95–100°F. Ambient: 75–85°F. Use a thermostat with **all** heat sources. A high-intensity **linear T5 HO 12% UVB tube** is mandatory for indoor setups to prevent crippling bone disease.

3. Nutrition: The Fiber Machine

Strictly 95% grasses and weeds (Timothy hay, orchard grass, Bermuda grass, dandelion greens, prickly pear cactus). **Avoid:** Grocery store lettuce, fruit, or animal protein, as these cause rapid, unhealthy growth, pyramiding, and organ failure.

***THE REALITY CHECK:** The Sulcata tortoise is a 70+ year commitment. You are adopting an animal that will weigh over 100 pounds. If you do not have the land, the security, and the budget to heat a large shed, please do not adopt this species.*

4. Health: Recovery Red Flags

- **Extreme Pyramiding:** Peaked shell caused by overfeeding/under-hydration.
- **Bladder Stones:** Straining to urinate is a medical emergency.

- **Respiratory Distress:** Often caused by damp, cold conditions in poorly ventilated shelters.

5. Enrichment & Sustainability

Sustainability tip: Landscape with tortoise-safe weeds and grasses to create a self-sustaining food source.

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