



## Hingeback Tortoises *Genus Kinixys sp.*

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- Hingeback tortoises are medium sized to large tortoise species indigenous to much of the tropical to sub tropical forests, savannahs, and woodlands of sub Saharan Africa depending on species.
- Commonly seen and available species include the Home's Hingeback tortoise (*Kinixys homeana*) and Bell's Hingeback tortoise (*Kinixys belliana*).
- Hingeback tortoises are medium to large sized tortoises with a shell and skin color of light to dark brown, grayish brown, to blackish, sometimes with yellowish orange scutes on the carapace. The most distinctive diagnostic feature of these tortoises are their hinged posterior thirds of their bodies and elongated shells.
- These tortoises, if given the proper care, and live for 20-40 years or more and require long term care and commitment.

### Size

Adult sizes of these tortoises typically ranges from 6-12" shell length depending on the species, age, and gender, as well as locality.

### Housing

Hingeback tortoises in captivity tend to be a shy species of tortoise, and should be provided with sufficient hiding opportunities. Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a minimum of a 4 foot by 2 foot or larger pen, enclosure, or stock tank is required. Glass aquariums are poor choices to maintain tortoises in. Substrates such as a mix of garden loam, peat or sphagnum moss, and/or coconut Bed a Best substrates are suitable choices. These substrates, or a combination thereof, can help provide and maintain the humidity levels (75-88%) these shy tortoise species require. Outdoor pens can work during the warmer months in Wisconsin, and provide ample access to natural sunlight. Outdoor pens must have a substrate at least 8-9" deep and at least enclosure of at least 18" high. Ensure predators cannot access an outdoor cage. Although they derive much of their water from their food, provide a shallow water dish or pan within the enclosure. Change every 2-4 days or if fouled. Soak them in warm water at least weekly if low humidity is an issue. Provide an artificially heated hide box, vegetation, and other furnishings for added security, especially if housed outdoors.

Providing proper temperature, gradient among different microclimates, and humidity is critical. Provide a thermal gradient with a ceramic or radiant heat emitter Ambient temperatures should be within 70-90 degrees F and the basking area from 80-85 degrees F. UVA/UVB lighting is not as essential for these tortoises as many other species, but if UV lighting is used, ensure it is low visibility. Maintain a light cycle of 12-14 hours per day. Monitor temperatures with a quality thermometer. If kept outside, move inside if daily temperatures drop below 70 degrees, and below the 50's at night.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

### Feeding/Diet

In the wild, these hingeback tortoises tend to be more omnivorous than most other tortoise species. They will graze or feed on various fruit, vegetable, and other plant material, as well as consume insects, earthworms, slugs, other invertebrates, and even small rodents and carrion (dead animal matter).

Feed hingeback tortoises in captivity a mixed and varied assortment of chopped up flowers, dandelion, dark leafy greens, fruits (such as melons), and vegetables daily (hibiscus,

turnip, kale, mustard, and collard greens). Be sure all food intended for tortoises is pesticide and herbicide free. Many of these are readily available in any grocer's market. Other protein based food items such as small, frozen thawed or prekilled rodents, as well as canned dog or cat food, or other canned turtle/tortoise diets can also be given to hingebacks, but sparingly. Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements, as well as added protein in leopard tortoise diets whenever possible. Many vitamin supplements are also widely available.

**Handling**

\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\*