



Leopard Tortoise *Stigmochelys pardalis*

- All tortoises are mainly terrestrial (land dwelling) and are characterized by highly domed shells and large, elephantine like feet.
- Leopard tortoises are indigenous to Sub Saharan eastern and southern Africa.
- Medium to fairly large tortoises with domed carapace and sculptured scutes, a yellowish to brownish yellow shell, head, and limbs, with intricate black to dark brown patterning on carapace.
- These tortoises, if given the proper care, can live for 50-70 years or more and require long term care and commitment.

Size

Adult sizes of these tortoises typically ranges from 9-18” shell length depending on subspecies and locality.

Housing

Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a minimum of a 6 foot by 4 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. 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, and overhead florescent and UVB incandescent lighting on a heavy duty clamp lamp. Ambient temperatures should be within 70-90 degrees F and the basking area from 90-95 degrees F. 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 tortoises are primarily herbivorous, and will graze upon a variety of grasses, flowers, fruits, vegetable and other plant matter as well as occasionally carrion and invertebrates.

Feed leopard tortoises in captivity a mixed and varied assortment of chopped up flowers, dandelion, greens and vegetables daily (hibiscus, turnip, kale, mustard, and collard greens). A small amount of fruit is also acceptable. Be sure all food intended for tortoises is pesticide and herbicide free. Many of these are readily available in any grocer’s market. Do NOT give iceberg lettuce, grain products, or dog and cat food. 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****