



Pancake Tortoise *Malacochersus tornieri*

- Unlike most tortoises, pancake tortoises will seek refuge in rocky crevices to make themselves inaccessible to predators.
- Pancake tortoises are a small to medium sized tortoise species indigenous to the dry, rocky, semi-arid regions of eastern Africa (including Kenya and Tanzania).
- Pancake tortoises are most easily identified by their thin, extremely flattened, oblong carapaces that range in color from brown to yellowish brown or grayish brown with an intricate series of lighter brown, yellow, or reddish brown radiating streaks and lines on each scute.
- 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 range from 6-9" carapace length.

Housing

Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a minimum of a 4 foot by 3 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, potting soil, peat or sphagnum moss, and/or coconut Bed a Best substrates, or rabbit pellets 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 12" high or higher.

Pancake tortoises are a communal species of tortoise, and can be housed together with similar sized pancake tortoises, although a minimum of an additional 2 square feet should be provided for each tortoise. Pancake tortoises are also surprisingly good climbers, and enclosure perimeters should be designed to prevent escape either by inward facing lips, or covered with mesh covering. 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. Pancake tortoises overall enjoy ample climbing, basking, and hiding opportunities provided within their enclosures including flat rocks, slabs, or similar hides.

Providing proper temperature, gradient among different microclimates, and humidity is also 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 70-75 degrees F and the basking area from 95-100 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, pancake 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 pancake tortoises in captivity a mixed and varied assortment of chopped up flowers, dandelion, leafy greens, grasses, hays, 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. Some commercially available turtle and tortoise diets may also be used to supplement this specie's diet in captivity. Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements, as well as added protein in pancake 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