



Red Footed Tortoise *Chelonoides carbonaria*

- All tortoises are mainly terrestrial (land dwelling) and are characterized by highly domed shells and large, elephantine like feet.
- Red footed tortoises are native to much of the Amazon basin and northern South America.
- Small to medium sized tortoises with a grayish to blackish or brown carapace (upper shell) with pale yellow or orange blotches on each scute. Scales on the head, neck, and forelimbs are often reddish orange, hence the name.
- These tortoises, if given the proper care, and live for 50-70 years and require long term care and commitment.

Size

Adult sizes of these tortoises typically ranges from 10-15” shell length.

Housing

Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a minimum of a 6 foot by 6 foot or larger pen, enclosure, or tortoise table. Glass aquariums are poor choices to maintain tortoises in. Substrates that enable burrowing such as a mix of play sand, garden loam, peat or sphagnum moss, and/or coconut Bed a Best substrates are good choices. Outdoor pens can work during the warmer months in Wisconsin, and provide ample access to natural sunlight. Outdoor pens must have a perimeter at least 8-9” deep and at least 12” 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 for added security.

Providing proper temperature and humidity is critical. Provide a thermal gradient with a ceramic or radiant heat emitter, and overhead florescent and UV incandescent lighting on a heavy duty clamp lamp, Cool end should be within 70-75 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.

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 omnivorous, and will graze upon a variety of grasses, flowers, fruits, vegetable and other plant matter as well as occasionally carrion and invertebrates.

Feed Red footed tortoises in captivity a mixed and varied assortment of chopped up flowers, dandelion, greens 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. Do NOT give iceberg lettuce, grain products, or dog and cat food. Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements, as well as added protein in red footed 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

