



## Russian and Hermann's Tortoises *Testudo/Agrionemys hermanni* and *Testudo/Agrionemys horsfieldi*

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- All tortoises are mainly terrestrial (land dwelling) and are characterized by highly domed shells and large, elephantine like feet.
- The Hermann's tortoise is native to much of Southern Europe. The Russian tortoise ranges from the Middle East, through southern Asia, and into Russia.
- Small to medium sized tortoises with a yellowish or brown carapace (upper shell) with large, dark patches on each scute. Head, limbs, and skin is usually tan, pale yellowish, to light brown.
- 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 5-8" shell length in males, and 7-11" for females.

### **Housing**

Provide a secure and escape proof enclosure. If housed indoors, a 50-70 gallon plastic tote can be used and is lightweight and easy to clean. 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 fluorescent 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 herbivores, and will graze upon a variety of grasses, flowers, and other plant matter.

Feed Russian and Hermann's 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 in 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\*\***