Aurora ANIMAL + HOSPITAL
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Red-footed Tortoise Care

Please note these care sheets are intended for the average reptile owner to ensure that your pet is receiving basic care needed to have a healthy life and there are other aspects of advanced care that can be considered for healthy pets.

Brief Description



The Red-footed Tortoise *(Chelonoidis carbonaria* is a popular reptile pet due to its appealing personality and attractive coloration. This species has a dark shell and skin with striking red coloration on the head and legs. Although native to several regions of South America red-footed tortoises are bred commonly in the US. They thrive in humid, warm climates. When scared tortoises will withdraw their body into their shell and their armored front legs will protect their head from smaller predators. The shell is living tissue and should never be pierced or painted. Adult size is 11-14" on average with females generally being smaller than males.

Lifespan

With proper care the expected lifespan is 40-80 years on average.

Sexing

The males will have longer tails the females and once mature the plastron (bottom part of the shell) will be concave and a longer, more pointed tail with a longer distance between vent and tail tip than the stubby tail of females where the vent is closer to the shell.

Caging

Tortoises need large enclosures and this species should be in a 75 gallon tank or larger, or outdoor enclosure when weather permits. Large containers such as Rubbermaid storage boxes or livestock troughs can also be used for enclosures successfully and inexpensively. There should be at least one or two things for your tortoise to hide under - half log, half buried clay pot, etc. and a water dish that will fit the tortoise's entire body length but only be a few inches deep. Outdoor pens will need to be secure to keep tortoises in and predators (especially dogs) out.

Substrate

Tortoises should be able to make shallow burrows in the substrate so a mixture of several of the following is best: organic soil, coco coir, peat moss, sphagnum moss, dead leaves. Avoid cedar/pine/aspen mulches, sand, carefresh bedding, alfalfa pellets, and sand. Non-toxic live plants can be planted directly in the substrate or kept in pots to provide cover and enrichment for your tortoise.

Lighting and Temperature

Reptiles need a warm place to bask (**80-90 degrees**) on one side of the cage in order digest food and nutrients properly. The other side of the cage should be cooler (**70 degrees**) so they don't overheat. A thermometer should be placed at the same level of the pet in the basking area to accurately measure temperatures. Lights should be on for 10-12 hours each day and then total darkness at night. Night temperatures can safely drop to 65 degrees so a night time heat source is not necessary in most homes.

Tortoises MUST have UVB light to survive and a lack of UVB will lead to Metabolic Bone Disease, severe illness, and death. A bulb that specifically provides UVB is necessary as UVB does not penetrate glass or plastic, so having the cage near a window is not adequate. T5 or T8 Zoo Med Reptisun 10.0 or Arcadia 12% are the preferred high quality brands. After about 6 months of use the bulbs will stop emitting adequate levels of UVB, even though they are still shining, so it's important to change the bulb every 6 months.

Water

A shallow water dish at least as big as your tortoise with fresh water must be available at all times. It should be stable, so it cannot be spilled, and it should be easy to climb in and out of from all sides. The dishes used under potted plants are excellent for water dishes and inexpensive. Tortoises enjoy full body soakings but often defecate in their water so it needs to be cleaned often.

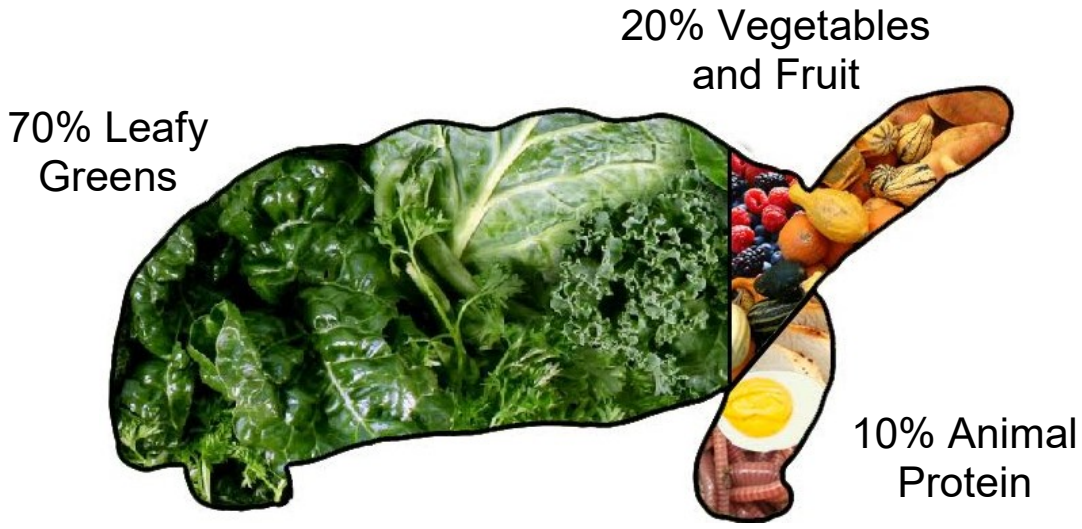
Humidity
Humidity in the enclosure should be 60-80%. This should be measured by a hygrometer. Often Red-footed tortoises need partially enclosed enclosures and the aid of a humidifier or mister to maintain appropriate humidity levels.

Food
Red-footed tortoises are primarily herbivores and need a variety of high quality vegetables and fruits. This species does benefit from small amount of animal protein a few times a month as well, but too much can cause problems.

Staple Vegetables (Highest in calcium and other nutrients) **– 70% of diet**					
					
Collard Greens	Turnip Greens	Mustard Greens	Escarole	Endive	Dandelion

Good Ingredients and Staple Fruits (Use as supplements to staples listed above) **– 20% of diet**					
					
Sweet Potato	Papaya	Butternut Squash	Kale	Berries	Mango

Protein Sources – about 10% of overall diet				
				
Worms	Eggs	Chicken/Turkey	Low Fat Dog Food	Snails/slugs



Supplementation
A powdered calcium supplement such as Repashy Calcium Plus should be used lightly sprinkled over the food 1-2 times weekly. A multivitamin can be used less frequently (once or twice a month) if desired but with good nutrition this is not always necessary. A piece of cuttlebone in the enclosure will provide calcium and keep the beak short.

Hibernation
Red-footed tortoises cannot hibernate and should remain within appropriate temperature ranges throughout the year. Heating sources should be used during colder seasons to maintain appropriate environment. Attempts to hibernate will quickly cause illness and death in this species.