

Spur-thighed tortoise

(*Testudo graeca*)



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Legislation: Appendix II CITES

Origin: Morocco, Algeria, southern Spain and Italy (Sardinia: where it was introduced)

Habitat: coastal area

Features: it can reach and exceed 22-30 cm in length. The convex carapace is a light colour that tends to darken with age. Supracaudal scute is unique.

Dimorphism: the males are smaller, have an elongated carapace and the plastron is quite concave, with the tail longer and wider at the base and the cloacal opening outside the carapace margins.

The females are larger, the carapace is rounded and the plate is flat.



Breeding in United Kingdom:

In Mediterranean areas this specimen can live outdoors all year. In this country, due to the peculiarity of the weather, more care is required when breeding.

The ideal condition would be an enclosed garden (burying the net to prevent escaping), with many plants, hiding places and shaded areas. Watch out for potential predators such as foxes, rats and dogs; cats are not usually a problem. Do not forget a bowl of water that must be changed daily. In the cold season controlled lethargy is recommended of about 3-4 months; this could be performed in a vivarium placed indoors such as in a garage or shed to protect the animal from too severe temperatures and high humidity. A safe alternative could be a fridge: this guarantees constant humidity and a temperature of 4°C. During hibernation weigh your animal every 3-4 weeks to assess the correct sleeping period.

One month before and 2-3 weeks after hibernation it is a good idea to take your tortoise to an exotic Vet for a complete check up. Remember to bring a faecal sample to test for intestinal parasites.

Diet: *herbivorous*

90% will be made up of "grass", while the remaining 10% will consist of fruit and vegetables. For example, you could plant directly in the enclosure plants on which the animal feeds freely so they are always fresh (dandelion, plantain, mallow, chicory, hibiscus); the diet can be supplemented daily by administering other vegetables. Hay must always be available. **A correct and balanced diet is the best way to prevent malformations during growth.**

Plants that should not be present in the garden and accessible to the animal include: ranunculus, oleander, ivy, ferns.

Never administer: food for dogs and cats, bread, pasta, legumes, bananas, citrus fruits, milk and dairy products, animal origin food .

Free App: available on the major app stores "**The tortoise table**".

