

Sulcata (African Spurred) tortoises

Heat and Light

This species requires constant access to very high levels of illumination and constant warmth. For light, we recommend that several high quality full spectrum tubes are used on all indoor terrariums. An incandescent spot lamp or infra-red dull emitter will also be required to provide basking heat to ensure normal activity and feeding. A temperature gradient is vital, from about 22 °C to 31 °C (about 72 °F to 88 °F) is adequate for this species. African Spurred tortoises may be kept out of doors in some areas, Southern California, for example, but in northern regions outdoor maintenance may only be possible for a very limited period each year. A Sulcata can grow from a palm-sized juvenile to 20 kg (45 lb) adult in less than 15 years.

Tortoise Trust
BM Tortoise
London
WC1N 3XX

WWW.TORTOISETRUST.ORG



A typical juvenile *Sulcata*



A typical adult *Sulcata*

Geochelone sulcata is the largest continental land tortoise with recorded carapace lengths to 83 cm (over 2.5 feet) and a maximum recorded weight of 105 kg (about 240 lbs.). African Spurred tortoises like (and need) space - lots of it. They are also extremely strong animals, so flimsy accommodation is definitely out of the question. All fixtures and fittings must be firmly bolted down and all fences and walls must be sufficiently resilient to resist the effort which will undoubtedly be directed at overcoming them! Our own Spurred tortoise house consists of a 2m X 2m (6' X 6') indoor grazing area, a secondary 2m X 2m sleeping quarters and a 7m X 4m (20' X 12') outdoor grazing area. This we consider adequate for 2 medium sized adults. Juveniles may be maintained out of doors in protected, secure enclosures whenever the weather permits, or indoors in open-topped pens. Like many tortoises, *G. sulcata* juveniles do not usually respond well to enclosed vivariums. An attractively landscaped open-topped enclosure provides both security and a stimulating, well ventilated environment.

In captivity, *G. sulcata* require a very high fibre intake. A lack of dietary fibre will precipitate digestive tract disturbance, diarrhoea and much increased susceptibility to flagellate and worm problems. The feeding of fruit will result in similar problems and can also result in severe colic. Fruit, if given at all, should be only an occasional treat. It should not form a regular part of the diet for this species. *Geochelone sulcata* require daily access to a natural grazing area and will feed readily upon mixed grasses, hibiscus, clover and - a great favourite - prickly pear pads.. Due to their prodigious rate of growth, their demand for calcium and mineral trace elements is high. A calcium-D3 supplement should be provided daily.

Further details on keeping Sulcatas are available from the Tortoise Trust.

- Sub-Saharan species
- Do not hibernate
- 100% herbivorous diet
- From arid habitats
- Does not tolerate damp or cold
- 3rd largest tortoise in the world
- Grows very quickly
- Requires extensive outdoor and indoor accommodation
- Regular soaking or constant access to water recommended

