

HERMANN OR GREEK TORTOISE HATCHLING CARE SHEET

The hatchling care requires proper light, heat, and substrate in addition to nutrition and water. As hatchlings, a small homemade box or aquarium will do fine; 24"x12" is all that would be required for the first year. Large enclosures are not recommended for hatchlings.

HEAT AND LIGHTING- Daytime UV lighting and a temperature gradient from 75°F to 95°F are required. There are many variations that can be used to accomplish this. One simple method is to use two lamps, one with a regular 60W (or 100W) incandescent light bulb and the other with a compact fluorescent 10.0/26W UV bulb. The most common bulb in local petstores, is the ExoTerra ReptiGlo Desert UVB Lamp. For small enclosures, this combination will provide enough UV light, visual light, and heat, although as larger enclosures are used, additional light may need to be added. Mercury Vapour Bulbs may be used as well as a source of visible light, heat and UV light. An undertank heat pad or ceramic heater may be used for supplemental night time heat if the environment falls much below 70°F.

To set up, the 60W lamp is generally placed over a desired basking area. The basking area should reach 95°F. Areas furthest away from the basking area should be about 75°F. The tortoise can now thermoregulate itself. The lamp with the UV bulb should be attempted to be placed in an area where the tortoise is most frequently. This can be an area where the tortoise often sleeps or walks, and may often be at the basking spot. Observing your tortoise's behaviour will determine where the UV bulb should be. It should be noted that the UV bulbs must be relatively close to the animal, ideally without glass or screen between the bulb and the animal. The bulb should be less than 8 inches above the tortoise to achieve significant UV exposure. Any distance of 12" or more and the bulb has very little or no effect. These bulbs only emit sufficient UV light for 1 year. As mentioned, an undertank heat pad can be added if desired to further control the heat gradient.

SUBSTRATE- As hatchlings, the substrate can last for several months and bricks of Plantation Soil are likely the best option. Occasionally spray the substrate with water to keep some humidity in the enclosure and reduce the dustiness. Pine and Cedar emit poisonous oils. Sand does not absorb odors. Aspen is common for reptiles, although the splinters that are present in shavings should not be eaten by small tortoises and it is often difficult to keep the food free of substrate. Spot cleaning of feces is all that is required to keep the substrate clean for a few months when hatchlings.

FOOD & WATER- The food should be a variety of greens, such as romaine lettuce, kale, or spring mix supplemented with commercial food such as Mazuri tortoise chow. Lightly dust the food 1-2 times per week with calcium powder with vitamin D added. Place 1cm chunks of cuttle bone around the enclosure for the tortoise to nibble on.

It is best to feed the tortoise on a piece of flat rock or ceramic tile. Uneaten food should be removed to prevent any rotten organics from accumulating in the enclosure. Water is important to keep clean as the tortoises will often defecate in the water dish. A very shallow dish will do great for the first few months. It evaporates quickly and will last longer if kept in the cooler areas.

HOT HUMID HIDE- Most research suggests that providing a hiding place that remains warm and humid will allow healthy smooth shell growth with as little pyramiding as possible. This is recommended, although care must be taken to not place the humid hiding area in a cool environment. With tortoises: warm & humid is safe, cool & dry is safe, hot & dry or cool & humid can create health and growth problems.

SOAKING- Frequent soaks for the hatchlings is necessary to maintain hydration. Soaking a few times a week for about 10-15 minutes is healthy. Adults should be soaked weekly.