
FEEDING HERMANN AND GREEK TORTOISES IN CANADA

Raising healthy tortoises in Canada

Slow 'N Steady Tortoises - May 2, 2015



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GENERAL INFORMATION

This manual is meant to serve as a simple introduction to feeding Hermann and Greek tortoises within the Canadian climate. Many online resources are very confusing, contradictory and often provide bad advice. Also, different tortoise species require different diets.

There are many healthy weeds, plants, flowers and vegetables for tortoises. However, many contain elements that interfere with calcium absorption, affect thyroid function, or offer no nutritional value and are therefore not recommended foods. A few are even toxic to tortoises. Please check the "Plant Database" of thetortoisetable.org.uk to determine the safety of most foods.

The Mediterranean tortoises (including Hermann and Greek tortoises) are strictly vegetarian. They do not eat insects and fruits are only sparingly offered as a treat. The diet should be high in fibre, low in protein, and contain necessary minerals and vitamins (such as Calcium and Vitamin D). This can only be obtained through a well balanced varied diet.

At Slow 'N Steady Tortoises, we feed mixed greens and commercialized pellet food. When the weather permits, weeds form most of the tortoises' diet. During our winters, we purchase mixed greens ("spring mix") and romaine lettuce most commonly. We can occasionally buy cactus pads. Mazuri Tortoise Chow is fed at least once a week year round.

COMMERCIAL DIETS

There are many commercial diets available. We have mostly used Mazuri Tortoise Chow as tortoises love it, it is nutritious, readily available and affordable. We believe that a weekly feeding of Mazuri pellets will greatly increase the likelihood of a nutritious diet. ZooMed Grassland Tortoise Food is also a well balanced high fibre diet that we like, although it is not easily bought in bulk in our area. We soak these pellets until they are soft and feed as much as

the tortoise wants to eat 1-2 times per week. We purchase Mazuri from our local feedstore, or it can be bought and shipped from Rens Pets in Toronto (as 25lb bags).

Dog and cat food are high in protein and fat, they should NOT be fed to tortoises.

MAZURI TORTOISE CHOW



ZOOMED GRASSLAND TORTOISE FOOD



COMMON WEEDS AND PLANTS

The most common natural foods in the Canadian Maritime provinces are Dandelion, clover and plantain. These three weeds are tortoise favourites! The leaves, stems, and flowers are all nutritious. Tortoises will graze on grasses as well. Thistle is also a staple to their summer diet. Cats ear and hawkweed can be similar appearing to dandelions and are also healthy and easy to find in our area. Common garden and house plants that are safe foods include Hosta, Roses, Spider plants, Geranium, Thyme, Violets, and Nasturtium. Leaves and flowers may be fed.

DANDELION



CLOVER



PLANTAIN



HOSTA



THISTLE



CATS EAR



HAWKWEED



THYME



Coltsfoot is a common toxic weed in Canada. Rhubarb and Potato plants are also toxic. These plants must be removed from any accessible area where the tortoise is kept outside. Queen Anne's Lace (wild carrot) is also not recommended as food.

COLTSFOOT



QUEEN ANNE'S LACE



HEALTHY GROCERY SHOPPING

In the colder months, very few Canadians can rely on our outdoor plants and weeds for food. Finding a healthy well balanced diet at the grocery store can be difficult. The most common and affordable "greens" in my locale are Romaine lettuce and "Spring Mix". I feed Mazuri tortoise chow twice a week during the winter months to ensure adequate nutrition. Lambs lettuce, red lettuce, chicory, endive, kale, pak choi, and radicchio may be fed. Cucumber has very little nutritional value, although may be occasionally fed. Carrot may be occasionally grated on top of the food, and the carrot tops fed sparingly. Generally, root vegetables (such as turnip, potato, sweet potato) should not be fed. Iceberg lettuce offers no nutritional value and may become a food of choice for tortoises, so it is not recommended.

Each October, I feed my tortoises pumpkin. It can be boiled till soft, or served raw. It is recommended to feed pumpkin only sparingly, so I feed this once per year after carving our family pumpkins! Some authors suggest that pumpkin has natural de-worming qualities.

Cabbage and spinach are not recommended to be fed, although a small amount in salad mixes are not toxic.

ROMAINE LETTUCE



SPRING MIX



RADICCHIO



KALE



PUMPKIN



FINAL THOUGHTS

At Slow 'N Steady Tortoises we rely on a mix of various plants and weeds to provide a healthy nutritious diet when the climate allows. A manual for identifying local plants and weeds, as well as TheTortoiseTable.org.uk plant database have been invaluable. Learning about your local areas plant life can become its own interesting hobby!

During our colder months, we rely heavily on Romaine lettuce and Spring Mix. To ensure good nutrition we feed Mazuri tortoise food at least weekly (twice/week in the winter). We supplement with calcium year round, and Calcium with Vit D is used when the tortoises do not get outside frequently.

We feed our tortoises almost everyday. Throughout the winter months, often the day after feeding Mazuri Tortoise chow, we skip a day of feeding. We feed them late in the day, which stimulates activity as they search for food around their enclosures.

Our tortoises are active and healthy (with our females producing eggs) all year round. Environment and nutrition are the keys to a long, healthy, and happy tortoise life!

This booklet has been written and designed by Slow 'N Steady Tortoises as a guide for raising healthy Hermann and Greek Tortoises in Canada. It's information is based upon our research of the literature and our personal experiences. It is intended for personal use.

APPENDIX A: Hermann and Greek Tortoise Diet Recommendations

HEALTHY	FEED IN MODERATION	FEED SPARINGLY	NOT RECOMMENDED OR TOXIC
Mazuri Chow	Romaine lettuce	Spinach	Rhubarb
Zoomed grassland food	Chicory	Pumpkin	Potato
Dandelion	Endive	Carrots	Turnip
Clover	Kale	Carrot tops	Corn kernels
Plantain	Pak choi	Iceberg lettuce	Peas
Thistle	Radicchio	Fruits	Cauliflower
Cats Ear	Cucumber		Broccoli
Hawkweed			Coltsfoot
Hibiscus			Queen Anne's Lace
Mallow			Insects
Roses			Meat
Spider plants			
Geranium			
Thyme			
Violets			
Nasturtium			
Lambs lettuce			
Spring mix			
Corn plant leaves			

APPENDIX B: Mazuri Tortoise Chow

5M21/5E06

Approximate Nutrient Composition¹

NUTRIENTS

Protein, %	15
Arginine, %.....	0.78
Cystine, %.....	0.20
Glycine, %.....	0.48
Histidine, %.....	0.43
Isoleucine, %.....	0.72
Leucine, %.....	1.1
Lysine, %.....	0.90
Methionine, %.....	0.35
Phenylalanine, %.....	0.84
Tyrosine, %.....	0.65
Threonine, %.....	0.55
Tryptophan, %.....	0.22
Valine, %.....	0.94
Fat (ether extract), %	4.5
Fat (acid hydrolysis), %	5.5
Linoleic Acid, %.....	2.2

Fiber (Crude), %	15
Neutral Detergent Fiber, %.....	30
Acid Detergent Fiber, %.....	18
Starch, %.....	23

Metabolizable Energy, kcal/kg²	2,903
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Mazuri® Tortoise Diet

MINERALS

Ash, %	7.4
Calcium, %.....	1.2
Phosphorus, %.....	0.65
Phosphorus (non-phytate), %.....	0.45
Potassium, %.....	1.0
Magnesium, %.....	0.20
Sulfur, %.....	0.21
Sodium, %.....	0.42
Chloride, %.....	0.72
Iron, ppm.....	380
Zinc, ppm.....	132
Manganese, ppm.....	134
Copper, ppm.....	19
Cobalt, ppm.....	1.1
Iodine, ppm.....	1.8
Chromium, ppm.....	1.9
Selenium, ppm.....	0.60

VITAMINS

Thiamin, ppm.....	9.2
Riboflavin, ppm.....	15
Niacin, ppm.....	67
Pantothenic acid, ppm.....	39
Choline, ppm.....	1,710
Folic acid, ppm.....	2.6
Pyridoxine, ppm.....	10
Biotin, ppm.....	0.57
Vitamin B ₁₂ , mcg/kg.....	31
Vitamin A, IU/kg.....	6,262
Vitamin D ₃ (added), IU/kg.....	2,850
Vitamin E, IU/kg.....	313
Vitamin K (as menadione), ppm.....	3.0

Storage Conditions

For best results, ensure polybag seal is fully closed during storage, or store contents of open paper sack in container with sealing lids. Store in a cool (75°F or colder), dry (approximately 50% RH) location. Freezing will not harm the diet and may extend freshness. Adhere to the "Best if used by" date or use within 270 days of bag manufacturing.