

Sulcata Tortoise Diet and Basic Care

DIET

The majority of a sulcata's diet should be from pesticide and herbicide free grass and grass cuttings, cheatgrass, clover, edible flowers (nasturtium, geraniums, hibiscus, rose petals) weeds and shrubs. Grass hays you can offer include Orchard, Timothy, Meadow Grass, and Oat Hay, and should be available at all times. Orchard grass hay is what our fosters and rescues seem to prefer.

NOTE: Always watch for moldy hay and remove it.

Dandelions, plantain weeds, mallow, rose petals, hibiscus, and grape leaves are excellent foods that can be given regularly as well.

Prickly Pear makes a nice treat for them.

Leafy greens can be offered about 20% of their diet. The veggie diet can include kale, mustard, turnip, and dandelion greens.

Limit greens that are high in oxalates, such as kale, parsley, rhubarb, and beet greens. These should make up maybe 5% of their diet.

Fruits should be avoided, as they can not process the sugars. It upsets the gut flora and throws their digestive system off. This can cause gas and loose stools, which can lead to dehydration. Because their metabolism is slow, building the good gut bacteria up again can take time.

As far as commercial diets, we use ZooMed Natural Grassland Tortoise Food, Standlee timothy grass pellets, Standlee orchard hay pellets, and Mazuri LS. Mazuri can be fed once or twice a week. These are great sources to complete their dietary needs.

For calcium, we use both cuttlebone, like the ones used for birds, (Just be sure to remove the hard backing) and powdered reptile calcium WITHOUT Vit D3 for tortoises who live outdoors part time or full time.

HEATED HOUSES:

NOTE: This is for tortoises 10 lbs and more. Smaller tortoises should have overhead heat.

For our heated houses, we use the Stanfield heat mats plugged into a rheostat. Other mats can be used too, along with either a rheostat or thermostat. The temperature should read about 70° on the mat. The tortoise should be able to move on or off the mat while inside the house to thermoregulate.

HELPFUL APPS

The Tortoise Table (TTT)

The Tortoise Table was formed in 2009 when a group of experienced tortoise keepers decided that it was time to put together an in-depth database of plants, flowers and other food suitable for our Chelonian friends to eat, after years of seeing the effects on tortoises and turtles which had been fed incorrect diets.

PlantNet

The PlantNet app is a free smartphone application that allows users to identify plants from photographs. The app contains a database of over 20,000 plant species, and users can submit their own photos of plants to the community for identification.

Use this to identify a plant, then you can look in TTT to see if those plants or weeds are safe to feed!