

FREE SAMPLE

# Russian Tortoise Care Package

The first 4 pages of the 38-page printable manual, free to keep.



**In this sample:** What's inside, How to Use This Package, Quick Profile & Cost Overview. The contents page shows every one of the 38 pages, so you can see exactly what the full package covers before you buy it.

**Not in this sample:** the 34 pages that follow, which are the full care guide, the health section, the quick reference cards, and the owner tools, checklists and logs.

**The full package** is \$8.99 at [beastlyfacts.com/care-packages/russian-tortoise/](https://beastlyfacts.com/care-packages/russian-tortoise/). One purchase, and every corrected edition is a free re-download from your library. The free russian tortoise care guide it was built from is at [beastlyfacts.com/guides/russian-tortoise/](https://beastlyfacts.com/guides/russian-tortoise/), and stays free.

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# What's inside

Every page is written to be used, not just read once.

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## START HERE

# How to use this package

Three ways to get value from it, depending on where you are right now.

## If you haven't bought a tortoise yet

Read pages 4 through 13 in order before buying anything. The enclosure on page 5 is the decision people get wrong most, because the thing sold as a tortoise tank is the wrong shape as well as the wrong size, and the UVB fixture on page 7 is the one you cannot substitute cheaply. Then use the Budget and Shopping List on page 28. Read page 25 too: the four-inch rule shapes what you can legally buy and from whom, and almost everyone repeats it wrongly.

## If your tortoise is already set up

Audit against the Setup Checklist on page 26. Two things are worth checking today whatever else you do: the actual surface temperature of the basking spot with an infrared thermometer, and the age of the UVB bulb, because output falls away months before the light looks dim. Between them they cause most of what is on pages 18 and 19.

## Print these first

- |                                                                    |                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Page 26: Setup Checklist & Targets        | <input type="checkbox"/> Page 33: Pet-Sitter Sheet                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Page 27: Emergency & Quick Targets Card   | <input type="checkbox"/> Page 34: Owner Log                           |
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### WHY THIS PACKAGE EXISTS

Russian tortoise advice is unusually contradictory, because the animal is genuinely hardy and so a lot of substandard care produces a tortoise that survives for years while slowly deforming. The commonest failures, a glass tank, weak UVB, damp bedding, and too much food, all take years to show. Every figure here is cross-checked against veterinary and specialist tortoise sources, listed on page 37, and every temperature and dimension is given in both imperial and metric.

### NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR

A reptile veterinarian with tortoise experience. This is a husbandry reference for day-to-day care. Anything health-related is a professional call, not a page in this book. Find that vet before you need one, and write the number on page 27. A general small-animal clinic often cannot help with a tortoise, and this species lives long enough that you will need one eventually.

## SECTION 01

# Quick profile

Everything at a glance before you read the detail.

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scientific name  | <i>Testudo horsfieldii</i> . Also sold as the Horsfield's tortoise, steppe tortoise, or four-toed tortoise                                                       |
| Native range     | Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and western China                                                                              |
| Habitat          | Semi-arid steppe, rocky desert and dry scrub. A burrowing animal, not a rainforest one                                                                           |
| Adult size       | 5 to 10 in (13 to 25 cm) shell length; the largest verified specimens reach about 22 cm (8.7 in) straight carapace length. Females are usually larger than males |
| Captive lifespan | 40 years or more, with individuals reaching 50 plus. Plan for succession of care, not just your own ownership                                                    |
| Diet type        | Herbivore. High fiber, low protein, low sugar, high calcium. Page 11                                                                                             |
| Indoor enclosure | 4×2 ft (120×60 cm) is the commonly quoted floor, 8×4 ft (240×120 cm) the modern species-reference target. Page 5 explains the gap                                |
| Enclosure type   | Open-topped tortoise table, not a glass tank. This is a ventilation and behavior issue, not a preference                                                         |
| Basking surface  | 95 to 100°F (35 to 38°C), measured on the surface with an infrared gun                                                                                           |
| Cool end         | 70s°F (about 21 to 26°C). Tolerates night lows to 60°F (16°C) without supplemental heat                                                                          |
| UVB              | Linear T5 HO tube, target UVI 3.0 to 4.0 at the basking site. Page 7                                                                                             |
| Humidity         | Low ambient, with a moist hide. Two credible sources disagree on the number. Page 8                                                                              |
| Brumation        | Physiologically programmed, 10 to 14 weeks at most, and optional indoors. Page 23                                                                                |
| Social           | House alone, or with care two females. Never two males. Page 10                                                                                                  |
| Legal status     | Colorado bans it; four states require a permit. Page 25. IUCN Vulnerable, CITES listed                                                                           |

## Cost overview

### Initial setup

\$400 to \$600 for a full indoor setup, of which \$125 to \$200 is the table alone. The tortoise itself is \$50 to \$400 depending on age and origin. Page 28.

### Ongoing

\$500 to \$650 a year: food, substrate, UVB replacement and electricity, which rises in winter in a cold climate.

### THE NUMBER THAT SHOULD DECIDE THIS

Forty years. A tortoise bought for a ten-year-old is likely to outlive that child's own children's interest in it. Rehoming a Russian tortoise is genuinely common and genuinely difficult, so the honest question before buying is not whether you can care for one now but who takes it in 2050. Write that person's name on page 27.