



A Division of Hooves & Claws

How to care for your baby tortoise.

HOUSING- (the quick and easy way) Your baby tortoise, if it is under 200 grams and is the only tortoise you have can be simply housed here in the Philippines in a large plastic bin that the base measures at least 450 square inches. Measure the length and width of the box in inches and multiply. If the number is 450 or greater it is an ok size FOR A BABY. Once past 200 grams you will need to create a much larger cage/pen for your pet, but the principles are basically the same, just larger for the greater success size of the animal.



Once you have bought your box you meet to add ventilation holes in the lid and around the upper 1/3 of the box for air circulation. You can do this by using a soldering pencil, a 1/8" drill bit or heating a 2 pronged meat turning fork on a stove burner. Place the holes about 1" apart around the rim and in several lines across the lid of the box. Next find a piece of styrofoam that your box can sit on. This is to insulate the bottom of the box from the floor or table. Next you need a heat source. Either a heat mat that covers up to 1/3 of the bottom of the box or a heat emitter with holder. The heat mats are cheaper to buy and cost less to run.



I recommend a mat under the box covering up 1/3 of the bottom of the cage placed UNDER THE CONTAINER, but on top of that piece of styrofoam that the box sits on. You will need a timer or plug the heating mat in for 4-8 hours per day and take a temperature reading inside the cage to adjust the temperature dial up or down to be in the appropriate optimal range for your species of tortoise. Using a temp humidity gauge at the level your tortoise is living at can help prevent respiratory problems and prevent shell pyramiding.

You will need to provide lighting to your baby tortoise and if you do not take it outside into natural sunlight every day for 20-60 minutes a day you will need to provide a light that gives off UV-B light so your tortoise can make vitamin D3. You will need a water dish your tortoise can climb into and a food dish that it can easily reach its head and neck into to get its food. I recommend placing the water dish on part of the area that is going to be heated by the heating mat. There are 2 reasons for this. If your tortoise is really cold it will warm up faster in the warm water and chose to climb in the dish and self soak. The other is warming the water raises the humidity level of your cage which you want to keep in the 70-90% humidity range. Your baby tortoise will want to sleep a lot so you need to provide it a hiding spot that has moisture holding sphagnum moss or other similar material on the bottom that came be rinsed out every other day and squeezed so it is not soggy wet. The hide can be as simple as 1/2 of a coconut shell with a door big enough for your tortoise to get in or a repurposed plastic container with a door and some ventilation holes added.



Next, you need some substrate for your tortoise to walk on and develop good leg muscles,, but not promote disease, or parasites. On babies, I have found the fake grass or moss squares to be ideal. They have tiny legs under the squares so you can put a thin layer of water under the square raising the humidity without your baby sitting in water all day long. The squares are easily cut to fit the size of your cage and lock together, give excellent grip for walking and are easy to hose off, clean and disinfect on a weekly basis.



0.1g 500g Gram Mini LCD
Digital Pocket-Size Jewelry
Gold Balance Weight Scale

DAILY CARE Your baby tortoise should come with its age and current weight. Write those down and weekly weigh your tortoise to be sure it is gaining weight steadily. Young tortoises need to be soaked in a pan of water. The water should not be so deep that the tortoise can not touch the bottom with its feet or it will stress the animal out. The water should be WARM NOT HOT 30-35° C a good range on most species. Soaking at least 20 minutes give the tortoise time to drink then defecate. If you do this daily you will rarely ever have tortoise feces to clean up! After soaking, it is a good time to feed.

FEEDING: There is no one specific diet that will fit your local availability and your tortoise species needs. Know before feeding, if your tortoise can have any fruits on a regular basis or is a grassland leafy veggie only species. Then offer a VARIETY. You don't like eating the same veggies or fruit every single day nor is that good for you or your tortoise. There are prepared tortoise diets that most tortoise will readily consume and are fine to use, but MIX it with FRESH FOODS. There are plenty of cultivated and wild plants that are great to feed to your tortoise, just be sure no pesticides have been used on these plants. On-line there are numerous references for edible and poisonous plants to tortoises. Any plant high in oxalates should NOT be fed to tortoises and plants with a milky white sap should usually be avoided. Below are some lists that I use regularly for reference.

http://africantortoise.com/edible_landscaping.htm

<https://www.bluelizardreptiles.co.uk/reptileinfo/safeplantsfortortoises>

<http://azeah.com/reptiles-amphibians-tortoises-turtles/edible-plants-and-weeds-tortoises-land-turtles>

<https://tortoise.org/general/tttplant.html>

<https://www.pinterest.ph/agillespie0550/edible-plants-for-tortoise/>

<https://www.thetortoisetable.org.uk/plant-database/viewplants/a-z/?l=a>

Hampshiretortoisessociety.org

<https://tortoiseforum.org/threads/pictures-of-common-plants-both-edible-and-toxic-for-tortoises.14564/>