

Baby Tortoise Care Basics

Dietary Management

Baby tortoises can grow quite rapidly, and in so doing they have a very high demand for calcium. Lots of extra calcium needs to be provided with each meal. Obtain a phosphorus-free calcium powder designed for reptile use, crush up human calcium tablets, or obtain pure calcium carbonate from an agricultural feed supplier. They also need vitamin D3. Without an adequate source of calcium AND vitamin D3 90% of baby tortoises die within 12 months!

Overfeeding, or feeding foods that are too high in protein, can also be fatal very quickly. Do not feed dog food or other meat products to herbivorous species. Also avoid peas and beans. Consult the Tortoise Trust dietary recommendations for your particular species.



You keep tortoises—and now you find that the eggs they laid have hatched! What do you do next? This brief care sheet will answer most of the questions you may have, although you should carefully check the rest of our website for detailed information on your particular species.

The first thing is to place the babies in the right housing. For desert species, this needs to be *dry* and warm. For rainforest, tropical, species the environment needs to be *moist* and warm. Most species do well if provided with a temperature gradient from about 22°C to 29°C. In general, we prefer not to use a “fish tank” type vivarium, especially for arid-habitat species. Babies need exactly the same conditions as adults of the same species. You will need to provide a BASKING LIGHT (for heat) and a full-spectrum fluorescent tube with UV-B output to promote normal behaviour and to permit vitamin D3 production. See our website article on “**Understanding Reptile Lighting Systems**”.

Babies are at great risk from dogs, cats, rats or even birds, so if you have them outside (which is generally good, as it provides access to natural sunlight, the best source of UV-B), you **MUST** protect them adequately. Use totally secure pens with a strong wire-mesh top. Do not use glass as this blocks UV-B and can also lead to fatal overheating.

Provide plenty of hiding places in the pen. We also recommend using a mixture of soft earth and sand as a surface layer. Change this regularly for hygiene's sake. Also provide a SHALLOW dish of water that tortoises can easily get in and out of. Drinking is important for good health. Feeding is a major problem area, and the exact details of diet required will vary according to the species. Ask us if you are not sure. One thing ALL baby tortoises need is adequate CALCIUM and a source of vitamin D3, provided as a supplement on the food, or from sunlight or special lighting.

- Consult the relevant species information on this website for detailed information.
- Provide safe, secure housing with adequate light and heat.
- Avoid ‘closed tank’ indoor housing; look instead at open-topped ‘tortoise table habitats’.
- Provide the CORRECT levels of humidity for the species. Do not keep tropical species dry, and do not keep desert species damp.

Tortoise Trust
BM Tortoise
LONDON
WC1N 3XX
UK

WWW.TORTOISETRUST.ORG

