

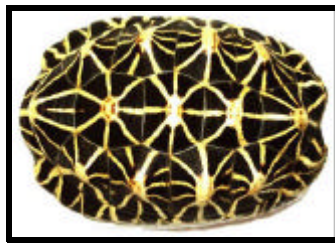
Indian Star tortoises

Juvenile Care

Young Indian Star tortoises are a common sight in many pet stores and markets throughout Asia. We estimate that 95% die within 6 months because their owners fail to provide an adequate diet or try to keep them in entirely the wrong conditions. It is absolutely essential that young Indian Star tortoises are provided with an adequate supply of calcium and vitamin-D3. If not, they will die from metabolic bone disease. Use a quality specialist reptile supplement or, if not available, crush human calcium supplement tablets into a fine powder and apply to the food daily. You should also ensure regular exposure to full, unfiltered sunlight, as this is essential to vitamin D3 synthesis.

Tortoise Trust
BM Tortoise
London
WC1N 3XX

WWW.TORTOISETRUST.ORG



Indian Star Tortoises – *Geochelone elegans*

This tortoise occurs in semi-arid, thorny and grassland habitats. It is also found in some regions featuring a higher level of precipitation. Not surprisingly, given its propensity for grassland habitats it grazes extensively upon mixed grasses. It also favours the fruit and pads of the prickly pear (*Opuntia* sp.), succulents and thistles. In captivity it is a common error to feed too much 'wet' food such as lettuce, tomatoes and fruit; in reality this tortoise requires a coarse, high fibre diet. Feeding excessive fruit or 'soft' foods frequently leads to repeated flagellate and other gut problems such as colic, most probably as a result of increased gut motility. Star tortoises will graze happily on lawn grass if presented with the opportunity and this seems to prevent most such problems at source. Meat products should never be given to Star tortoises, nor should high protein vegetables such as beans feature regularly in the diet. This invariably leads to excessive growth, poor bone formation, dangerously high blood-urea levels, bladder 'stones' and liver problems. Their demand for calcium and mineral trace elements is high. Use of a supplement is critical – especially with juveniles and egg-laying females. This species will do well if allowed to roam a well planted tropical garden. Access to natural sunlight must always be provided, but take care not to allow the animal to overheat. Shade is equally essential. If kept indoors, an oral vitamin D3 supplement must be given, alternatively, use high output UV-B full spectrum tubes and change them regularly. Star tortoises like to drink and soak in shallow water, so always ensure that a clean bathing and drinking tray is provided. Do not mix with other species, as Star tortoises have proved very susceptible to catching diseases from other tortoises, even if those tortoises appear healthy themselves. Please consult our other care sheets on diet, health, and housing for further information on caring for this species.

- From Indian subcontinent
- Does not hibernate
- 100% herbivorous diet
- From dry grassland habitats
- Does not tolerate damp or cold, but does enjoy warm rainfall periodically
- Requires extensive outdoor and indoor accommodation
- Regular soaking or constant access to water recommended

