

Red-Footed Tortoise

Yellow-Footed Tortoise



The **red-footed tortoise** (*Chelonoidis carbonaria*) is a tortoise native to South America. It has also been introduced to many islands in the Caribbean. It draws its name from the red or orange scales visible on its limbs, as well as its head and tail. The red-foot has a larger cousin, the **yellow-footed tortoise** (*Chelonoidis denticulata*), also known as the Brazilian giant tortoise.

Description

Size: Red-foots will normally reach between 10 and 14 inches; Yellow-foots may grow up to 16 inches. Red-foot males are larger than females in carapace length and weight, but are not wider or taller. Males can easily reach twenty pounds or more, while females weigh a bit less. As with other tortoise species, male red-foots have a concave plastron. Mature males also have longer and wider tails than females.

Lifespan: A red-foot tortoise generally lives 40–50 years.

Care

A properly cared-for red-foot is one of the best tortoise species to maintain in captivity. As with any animal, one should put in a great deal of research and deliberation before obtaining a red-foot or yellow-foot as a pet. The San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society can be your partner in guiding you on your journey. The Society can also recommend several highly qualified Veterinarians in the area that specialize in Reptile health and development.

Captive habitats

Tortoises are adapted to living outdoors and need sunlight, water and other outdoor conditions to thrive. The captive habitat should be large enough to allow the tortoises plenty of room to explore and exercise. The habitat should also be equipped with a large sunken water dish, shade, and hiding places.

Protective housing should allow the right temperatures and moisture levels needed by the species. Cypress or other hardwood mulches without aromatic resins may be the best substrate for Red-foot tortoise housing because of the way it simultaneously holds moisture, yet offers a dry surface. Other types of substrates are available and can work, but avoid those that can lead to dehydration, fungal growth, etc. such as rabbit pellets or wood shavings.

Red-foot tortoises prefer a temperature of between 80° and 90°F., and high levels of humidity in at least some parts of the habitat (although they do not tolerate being on wet surfaces for very long). If natural, unfiltered (not blocked by glass or plastic) sunlight is not available, the habitat should be lit for about 12 hours a day. Use low wattage lighting for smaller tortoises. Bulbs that offer at least low levels of UVB lighting are recommended to replace missing sunlight. Some bulbs can combine heat, UVB, and lighting but are generally best for larger habitats.

Feeding

Red-foot tortoises are omnivorous. In captivity, red-foots should be fed a mixture of high calcium greens, fruits, vegetables, and flowers and a small amount of animal protein. Appropriate greens include dandelion greens, turnip greens, collard greens, grape leaves, and hibiscus leaves. Flowers are also a common food of choice in the wild. Edible flowers include hibiscus, nasturtium, prickly-pear flowers, and dandelions. Varying the diet offered helps ensure good nutrition.

Good fruits to offer include strawberries, peaches, pineapples, plums, papayas, mangoes, kiwifruits, melons, and prickly pear fruits. Banana should be fed seldom, and with the peel. Fruit should form less than about 1/4 of the weekly diet.

Red-foot tortoises in particular seem very sensitive to environmental change. When first acquiring a red-foot, expect a possible long period of fasting. Just when one thinks something is terribly wrong, the red-foot will suddenly start eating again once she/he feels comfortable with the surrounding.

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