

# Tortoises and terrapins (chelonians)



Know what your tortoise or terrapin needs.



## FOOD AND WATER

- Find out about the varied diet needed to stay healthy – don't just feed them lettuce.
- Your tortoise must have access to a shallow bowl of fresh, clean water.



## A GOOD HOME

- Make sure your terrapin has access to both dry land and a warm pool for swimming. Find out about suitable heat sources, so that your terrapin can warm up or cool down.
- Find out about how to provide tortoises with an indoor and outdoor home which is dry and warm, with suitable lighting to help their normal development.



## COMPANY

- Be able to recognise the difference between males and females – some tortoises live alone, and other species can be grouped into different sex pairs or small groups of the same sex. Terrapins can be grouped, as long as all are of a similar size.



## TO BEHAVE NORMALLY

- Find out if your tortoise naturally likes to burrow, hide, or bathe in shallow water, so the home you provide allows for such activities.



## TO BE HEALTHY

- Get to know your tortoise or terrapin to help spot any signs that something is wrong – take your tortoise to the vet if unwell or injured.
- Not all species of tortoises hibernate! Your vet can also advise on whether your tortoise is heavy and healthy enough to survive.

**This is very basic information.** Find out more about what your chelonian needs. Talk to us on the RSPCA advice line: 0300 1234 555 or visit: [www.rspca.org.uk/petcare](http://www.rspca.org.uk/petcare)

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TORTOISE AND TERRAPIN CARE

## Your tortoise or terrapin deserves the best care possible so make sure you are also prepared to:

- check that the person who looks after your pet when you go on holiday knows all about the care needed, including maintaining suitable lighting and heating
- accept that tortoises can live for more than 50 years, and terrapins for 30 years
- find out what size your tortoise or terrapin will grow to – for instance, the African spurred or sulcata tortoise is a giant that can reach a length of 80 centimetres!



Don't oil or scratch your tortoise's shell as this can block the pores, attract dirt and increase the risk of infection. Also, watch out for shell deformities and other health problems, which can be caused by an unbalanced diet or insufficient UV lighting.



PICS: TOP: ANDREW FORSYTH, MIDDLE: JOE BLOSSOM/RSPCA PHOTOLIBRARY, OVER PAGE: COLIN SEDDON

# Did you know...

the law that protects pets has changed? You have a legal responsibility to care for your chelonian.

Find out more at: [www.rspca.org.uk/petcare](http://www.rspca.org.uk/petcare) or talk to us on the **RSPCA advice line: 0300 1234 555**

0300 numbers are charged at your carrier's national rate, inclusive of call packages.

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