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## **Outdoor Tortoise Care**

Tortoise's can be outside during the warm hours in the summer months in the UK. If your tortoise is outdoors, it should be contained with a shaded area. Tortoises can dig out of gardens. Food and freshwater must always be available. Bring the tortoise indoors if the temperature drops below 20 oc and before it starts to get dark. Finally remember that tortoises can become prey for neighbourhood dogs, cats and foxes, so keep this in mind when housing tortoise outdoors. Beware of lawnmowers, compost heaps or bonfires.

Having the tortoise loose in the garden is not advised. The tortoise can escape by digging, hide, hibernate in inappropriate conditions or be eaten by dogs, cats, foxes, herons or rodents depending on the animal's size. When constructing the run it is important to create a solid barrier so the tortoise cannot see out of the run. Repetitive head trauma from escape attempts can lead to bony infection of the skull, which can be fatal. Covering the run will prevent predation and reduce the risk of theft.

A heated section will be needed it is possible to construct a shed section or adapt a greenhouse for this purpose. Within this heat source should be provided.

- In the heated area newspaper is recommended as a substrate AVOID sand , gravel, wood shavings and cat litter as can cause impaction if eaten
- Outside the enclosure a grass and herbs and weeds should be encouraged to grow for feed.
- Hides should be provided in all areas
- UV-B light is necessary to provide vitamin D failure to provide can predispose your tortoise to metabolic bone disease. Outside the sun provides adequate UV-B on warm sunny days, you must make sure there is no glass or plastic interposed between the tortoise and daylight as otherwise an artificial UV-B source would be required

### **SALMONELLA**

- All reptiles can potentially carry Salmonella.
- However it is rarely a cause of illness in reptiles and treatment is not required.
- It can be transmitted to people (especially young children or those who are immunocompromised) so good hygiene after handling the reptile is important.
- Generally washing your hands in soap is sufficient. There are commercially available disinfectants that can be used as an alternative.

### **ANNUAL HEALTH CHECKS**

- We recommend annual health checks every year for pet reptiles as medical problems are more easily treated if detected at an early stage
- as well as faecal checks every 6 months.

### **INSURANCE**

- We highly recommend that you take out a pet insurance policy. For a monthly fee your pet can receive the best treatment at an affordable cost. There is normally an excess to pay for each condition then after that costs are covered up to a set limit. Once you have the policy, please provide us with a copy of your insurance details.