



Sulcata

Tortoise

Centrochelys sulcata

Enclosure

Using the traditional "adult tortoise enclosure size" formula—10 times the carapace length for the length, 5 times for the width, and 3 times for the height—the **minimum** enclosure size for an adult Sulcata tortoise is 24 feet long, 12 feet wide, and 4 feet tall. While some people house multiple Sulcatas together, Badgerland Reptile Rescue advises against it for most keepers due to potential stress and territorial behavior. If multiple tortoises are kept together, the enclosure size must be increased, with additional food, shelter, and basking spots to prevent resource aggression.

For outdoor enclosures, it is essential to provide shelter for the tortoise to escape the elements and ensure the enclosure is secure and "Sulcata-proof" to prevent them from investigating and escaping. Both indoor and outdoor enclosures should have a substrate that allows for natural digging behavior. A mixture of organic topsoil, play sand, coconut fiber, and cypress mulch is recommended, with a minimum depth of 12-16 inches for adult Sulcatas, though deeper is better.

Heating

For indoor Sulcatas, maintain a basking spot temperature of 100-105°F and an ambient temperature gradient of 76-88°F. Night-time temperatures can be at room temperature, but for younger Sulcatas, it's best to keep night-time temperatures around 70°F.

For outdoor Sulcatas, provide a heat source inside their shelter if night-time temperatures drop below 60°F.

Please note that a reliable thermostat must always be used with any heat source!

Humidity

Hatchlings and juveniles need a minimum of 80% humidity, while adults can tolerate humidity levels between 50-90%, provided the ambient temperature is at least 80°F.

UVB

If kept inside, we recommend the following: Arcadia Desert 12%, Arcadia Dragon 14%, Zilla Desert 50, ZooMed ReptiSun 10.0

Diet

Sulcata tortoises require a high-fiber, grass-based diet. Approximately 80% of their daily intake should consist of a mixture of grasses, edible weeds, herbs, and other plants, with the remaining 20% being vegetables. It is best to avoid fruit, as their digestive system is not suited for it. While variety is beneficial, the single most important aspect is allowing Sulcatas to graze throughout the day.

Some keepers find that supplemental diets such as Mazuri Low Starch Tortoise Food or ZooMed Grassland Tortoise Food help ensure proper nutrition. These diets should be offered in addition to the regular diet options listed above. Additionally, cuttlebone is a great supplement, providing extra calcium.

Signs of a Healthy Sulcata Tortoise

- Visibly alert and responding to stimuli in its environment
- Bright, clear eyes with no sign of discharge
- Dry, clear nostrils with no sign of discharge
- Beak should not appear overgrown
- No signs of obvious injury or sores
- No ticks or mites present
- Shell should be smooth, feel firm to the touch and have no obvious bumps or signs of injury.
- Active and able to walk, with normal muscle tone.

Average Lifespan

55-75 years

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This educational resource was created by
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