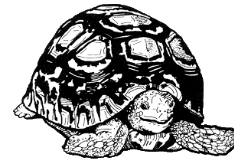


African Leopard Tortoises



(*Geochelone pardalis*)

The Leopard tortoises are found in Africa and their range extends over much of the south and east, having been recorded from the southern parts of the Sudan and Ethiopia, the Somali Republic, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Rhodesia, Botswana, Natal, Transvaal, Cape Province, Southwest Africa and Angola. Their typical habitat is SAVANNA, with more vegetation.

Leopard tortoise can reach a size of about two feet long and can weigh up to 70 lbs. There are variations and some tortoises never grow beyond 10 lbs. and others can grow up to 100 lbs.

The Leopard tortoise has a highly domed carapace (top shell) with black splotches on an tawny-yellow or buff base. By nature, they are very shy animals and should never be housed where there is a lot of human activity around them. Coming from Africa, they must never become chilled and only allowed outdoors when you can go out without wearing a sweater. Tortoises and turtles always do best when kept outdoors, however, in the winter months, this tortoise must be kept where it is warm. You must provide warmth and plenty of it, a VitaLite, and plenty of fresh food. A place to hide is VERY important to their well being.

In the summer, outdoor housing is best, but they must be protected from dogs and raccoons and possums. Make sure they have a secure structure to retreat into at night and make sure they are in it and not sitting out every night. Install an electric fence if necessary, to keep out the predators. Cats are usually no problem. The tortoises are very fond of grazing and must be allowed to do so every day during the spring, summer and fall.

FOODS: Grass is the number one food, so don't ever spray with fertilizer or insecticide and warn your neighbors not to spray anywhere near your yard. If you catch them doing so, bring in the tortoise and thoroughly hose down every inch of your property with water. Leopard tortoises also enjoy eating opuntia cactus pads, alfalfa, clover, melons, apples (no seeds), peas, corn on the cob (raw), escarole, zucchini, shredded carrots, dichondra, beet greens, oranges and tangerines, tomatoes, peaches, all squashes, pumpkin, romaine lettuce, endive, green beans, broccoli, some cabbage, frozen mixed vegetables (thawed). You can also try Pretty Pets Large Tortoise Food. They seem to enjoy this product altho don't overdo it. Too much of anything is not good. A variety is always best and after awhile the tortoise will learn that you are feeding him and he won't be so shy. Provide pans of fresh water about the yard altho sometimes they will only drink from the water running from a garden hose on the ground.

If the turtle has been wild caught, he is probably full of worms. Consult a vet for confirmation and treatment, usually with Panacur. Their stools should be checked periodically after that. I find that eating the cactus pads keep the worm population down.

Leopard tortoises are usually very healthy and illness is brought on by cool temperatures, so be very careful not to let it get chilled. Stress also brings on illness, so let the tortoise have a peaceful life by not allowing a lot of activity around him and don't let anybody pick him up unless it is absolutely necessary and don't ever turn him upside down.

