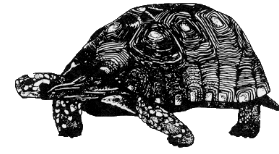


The Redfoot Tortoise



(*Geochelone carbonaria*)

The Redfoot tortoise is also called the REDLEG tortoise or Savanna tortoise. This South American tortoise was very common in pet shops but is less so at present. The natural habitat of this animal is savanna areas and scrubby grasslands, although it is sometimes found in deep forests.

DESCRIPTION: Redfoot tortoises are identified by large yellow head scales and orange-red scales on the limbs and tail. The shell is slightly elongated from very dark brown to black. The central parts of the laminae are yellowish. Redlegs reach maturity at 10 to 12 inches with a maximum length of 18 inches. Adults may weigh up to 30 pounds.

SPECIAL CARE: These tortoises are from very warm climates and so do NOT hibernate under normal conditions. They do best if kept all year at temperatures of 75 to 90 degrees F. An area should be provided that is of a constant 80 to 85 degrees which the tortoise can go to and adjust its body temperature. They should be kept indoors and active in winter, preferably in a heated terrarium. In summer, they may be left outside unless temperatures exceed 105 degrees or go below 70 degrees. They can stand more severe temperatures, but problems may arise by

way of respiratory ailments, or at a high temperature, heat strokes.

Redlegs need water to drink and bathe in, preferably at all times and at least every other day. Due to their coming from an area with high humidity, they seem to rapidly dehydrate, even with moist foods being offered and so require water. Any newly acquired specimen should be given a long drink and bath immediately upon acquisition; bathing also helps them to eliminate waste material.

These tortoises eat the largest variety of foods of seemingly any tortoise in existence. A food list consists of the following: All fruits and vegetables, both fresh and cooked; eggs; lean meat; canned dog food and dry dog and cat food moistened and cottage cheese. The fruits include apples, pears, peaches, apricots, bananas, grapes, papayas, cantaloupe, watermelon and other melons. Vegetables include both fresh and fresh frozen with a favorite being corn on the cob, romaine lettuce and other lettuce varieties, mustard greens, celery, squash, tomatoes, chard and carrot (cooked or grated). Feeding will take place at any time of the day or night if light is provided with other factors such as heat and water are met, as these tortoises have prodigious appetites. They should be kept with other aggressive tortoises of like size.

The Redfoot tortoise, especially, is one of the hardiest tortoises to captive raise or keep and offers few problems. They are good around children, are very intelligent and can offer the advantage of reaching fair size in a relatively short period of time. They may

grow to adulthood size in 15 years or so if optimum growth occurs.

