



### A continued heavyweight in the tortoise community.

With their small size, hardy disposition, and charming personalities, it's easy to see why the Hermann's tortoise remains one of the most popular tortoise pets today. Their size and availability mean that their affordable husbandry requirements can be easily maintained in any home or apartment. As for as tortoises go, this species makes an acceptable species for first time tortoise owners.

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### Lifespan

With proper care, these tortoises can exceed 50+ years.

### Size

Depending on the species, Hermann's tortoises grow to a small 6-8". Females are typically larger than males once mature, but even the largest individuals rarely exceed 8".

### Natural History

Hermann's tortoises originate from eastern Europe to western Turkey and belong to a group of Mediterranean tortoises that include several species, such as the Greek and Marginated tortoise. The population of Hermann's is divided into two sub species and can be found in areas that feature low shrubs and thick vegetation.

### Housing

Hermann's tortoises can be housed in an inside or outside enclosure, but it is recommended that hatchling and juveniles be raised indoors until they reach a size which is less vulnerable to predators and the elements. For this active species, it is best to offer as much space as possible and upgrade as the tortoise grows. Do not use glass aquariums. Tortoises simply cannot comprehend what glass is and continue to stress themselves out by pacing up and down the enclosure walls. It is best to house them in an enclosure which contains solid sides, such as a Rubbermaid container or an enclosure specifically designed for tortoises. A single adult or several hatchlings can be raised together in an enclosure measuring 2x3 feet, with a minimum height of six inches.

If housed outdoors (April – October is acceptable in most parts of the US), ensure that the enclosure is escape proof, provide both sun and shade opportunities, and contain a framed lid equipped with wire mesh and latches to protect against predators. Be prepared to bring your tortoise inside once the weather begins to cool.

### Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For these tortoises, these active, nomadic reptiles enjoy consistently warm temperatures with adequate levels of humidity.

As a semi tropical species, Hermann's tortoises should be kept warm with a narrow temperature drop at night. Provide your tortoise with a basking spot of 90-100F at the top of the enclosure, with an ambient temperature between 75-80F. At night, temperatures can drop between 60-70F. Humidity levels should fall between 60-70%. Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends of the enclosure.

Hermann's tortoises need ultraviolet light, necessary in the absorption and metabolism of calcium and D3. Additionally, exposure to appropriate wavelengths of UV can provide a 12-14 hour day/night cycle for your tortoise and display your pet in its best colors. Providing a high output UVB is a necessity and not just a recommendation for this species (unless housed outdoors).

## Substrates & Cage Décor

For substrate, often a mixture of different medias work best for this burrowing reptile. A >4" blend of coco coir, top soil, peat moss, and sand work well together to generate a substrate that best mimics what they experience in nature. An added ~2" layer of cypress mulch and/or leaf litter at the top also aids with the replication of proper humidity levels. Since humidity is so important and dehydration is a real threat to this species, never let the substrate dry out completely. It is not uncommon to find your tortoise buried beneath the substrate!



Half logs, drift wood, cork bark flats and rounds, and upside down plastic tupperware with a hole cut into it or commercially available, appropriately sized artificial tortoise houses make great hides. To break up the space, artificial or live, tortoise safe plants can be placed in the enclosure.

## Diet & Nutrition

Hermann's tortoises are herbivores. This means that they should be offered a variety of different greens, fruits, and vegetables; a diet low in protein but high in fiber and calcium.

For both young and adult Hermann's, food should be offered daily in a shallow dish or tray. A commercially available pellet can act as a base for tortoise diets, while dark leafy greens and colorful vegetables fill the remainder of the salad. Stick with dark leafy greens, such as collard, mustard, dandelion, endive, and turnip greens, and stay away from lettuces. For vegetables, it's best to select vegetables which are high in orange and yellow coloration, such as carrots, butternut squash, sweet potatoes, and bell peppers. Fruit should make up no more than 10% of the diet and act as a treat or supplement. Appropriate fruit choices include papaya, mango, figs, blueberries, and strawberries. Purchase organic whenever possible.

Additionally, it is beneficial to offer your tortoise occasional browse, herbs, and grasses. Mulberry makes exceptional browse, while pesticide-free weeds such as dandelion flowers, clover, plantain and thistle also make excellent choices. Timothy grasses, similar to what is fed to livestock, can be offered occasionally while dried herbs make palatable toppers. Water should be offered in a large, shallow (<1") bowl and replaced daily.

All food should be dusted with a high quality phosphorous free, calcium/D3 supplement at least twice a week when feeding babies and less when feeding adults. Of course, a cuttlebone can be placed in the enclosure for choice calcium instead. A high quality multivitamin is also recommended – follow manufacturers directions.

## Handling & Temperament

As with any new pet, avoid handling until your pet has acclimated to its new environment. Even still, in the case of the Hermann's tortoise or any other tortoise for that matter, it is best not to handle your tortoise unless absolutely necessary. Handling an animal that primarily lives its life on the ground can cause unnecessary stress so it is best to let them be and appreciate them as a beautiful display animal in your home.