

## Russian Tortoise

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Russian Tortoises are an outgoing, highly entertaining species, which makes them attractive as pets. However, they live a very long time - anywhere from 50 to 100 years is possible. Therefore, before purchasing your new pet, it's important to make sure you're up to the lifelong commitment. Alternate names for this species include: Horsfield's Tortoise, Steppe Tortoise, and Afghan Tortoise.

It is highly inadvisable to mix the Russian Tortoise with other species. Not only are there potential health risks in doing so, their structure and behavior renders them incompatible with most other tortoises. Severe traumatic injuries are a frequent consequence of mixing them with other species. In addition, this is an aggressive species to its own kind. If housing more than one male or a pair of this species, it's important to provide sightline breaks and a large habitat to prevent males from damaging females or each other.

### Species Profile: Russian Tortoise

<b>Scientific Name:</b>	<i>Agrionemys horsfieldii</i>
<b>Natural Environment:</b>	Afghanistan, Northern Pakistan, Northern and Eastern Iran, North Western China and the Soviet territories Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.
<b>Average Size:</b>	Vary from 4"-8" in length.
<b>Average Life Span:</b>	50 years.
<b>Appearance:</b>	They are found in a range of colors from bright yellow to nearly black, but most are olive drab to brown in coloration.
<b>Habitat</b>	
<b>Lighting:</b>	Use a full-spectrum fluorescent light with UVB for 12-14 hours a day. A UVB source is necessary for Vitamin D <sub>3</sub> synthesis.

**Temperature:** A basking spot at 90-95°F with a temperature gradient down to the low 70's and a nighttime temperature drop into the 60's.  
Humidity: Around 60%.

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**Housing:** An enclosure of at least 2 ft x 4 ft with sand/soil as a substrate, ideally deep enough to allow burrowing. Aquariums are not recommended as tortoises don't understand the concept of glass and will continually try to go through it. It is essential to provide a very secure pen as these tortoises are exceptionally agile and persistent escapers. They must be kept in an area with a dry retreat as cold, wet conditions often lead to disease. A shallow dish of water should be provided that is large enough to allow the tortoise to soak in and a hide box should be placed at the cooler end of the temperature gradient.

**Diet/Feeding:** A high fiber, low protein, and calcium rich diet will ensure good digestive tract function and smooth growth. Their diet should consist of leafy greens (dandelions, clover, endive, weeds, etc.) and grasses. Hay may also be fed (timothy or Bermuda). Dandelions are a favorite of this species. Additional calcium supplementation is essential.

**Behavior/Interaction:** Russian Tortoises are active, friendly, and outgoing creatures who like to burrow and roam amidst their habitat. With gentle, patient handling, they can easily become tame and friendly.