

## Redfoot Tortoise

Geochelone carbonaria



A personable medium/large tropical species of tortoise.

**Size** They can weigh up to 9kg and measure up to 16 inches, but many are smaller depending on their locale.

We keep both the brighter colored locale often referred to as a 'Cherry Head' with vivid red markings on their heads and the regular and often larger type, but both are scientifically the same and care is identical.

**Natural Range** Originating from South America, Panama, Argentina

**Diet** Tortoise eating an omnivorous diet (see our Omnivore Diet sheet) with a particular fondness for mushrooms and fruits such as melon. They do consume a higher percentage of fruits than other tropical species. In the wild they have been known to consume carrion as an extra form of protein.

**Indoor Enclosure** These tortoises need lots of space and a higher humidity, try to aim for 70% ambient humidity. You can be elaborate and set up a misting system such as Mist King or simply run a humidifier or spray the tortoises regularly with a spray bottle or watering can. Be careful not to over wet the

substrate though as this can cause problems such as shell rot. Hides are well used and provide restful areas for your tortoise.

Access to drinking water is essential preferably in a large enough dish for the tortoise to soak in. They are messy and delight in walking through their water bowls especially after you have just refreshed it!

They love to have a regular soak in warm water and will often take long drinks and urinate and defecate in their bath!

**Substrate** We find that a deep layer of coconut coir topped off with bark mulch or coarse coconut works well for this species as it retains moisture.

**Temperatures** These tortoises prefer an ambient temperature of around 80F, they can be provided with a basking bulb at 90F but do not bask as much as some other species. A slight night drop in temperature is simply fine down to 75F. Ceramic heat emitters work well for this species too as a source of heat. Provide some UV lower output would be acceptable, but we tend to use the high output for all species here. Provide a 12-hr photo period.

**Outdoor Enclosure** We have our groups out in the summer in large outdoor well planted areas so that they can shelter from the sun and choose many shady retreats. We built an outdoor shelter with heat on a thermostat so that they can be safely left out at night. Otherwise bring them in every night to keep them warm. Ours love to be out in cloudy weather too if its warm and enjoy the rain showers or alternatively we have the water sprinkler on for short periods and they all march around in the 'rain'. Again, a nice large water container is appreciated, and they will soon be muddy but very happy with themselves.

**Behaviour** Friendly and curious souls who are somewhat semi-social as a group preferring to be in proximity and sharing favourite basking resting places. Babies start out a little on the shy side but over time they develop beautiful personalities-definitely worth the wait!



*Written by Louise Bonser*

**Prairie Hills Tortoises**