

# Spur-thigh Tortoise



**Scientific Name:**

*Geochelone sulcata*

**Range:**

All areas of Africa EXCEPT rainforests

**Habitat:**

Hot, dry desert to grasslands and scrublands.

**Average Size:**

Length: 18-36 inches

Weight: 80-150 pounds

**Lifespan in Captivity:**

80-150+ years, maybe more

**Diet:**

*Wild:* Any plant matter available, especially succulent leaves.

*Zoo:* Various different kinds of fruit and vegetables.

**Reproduction:**

*Incubation:* about 8 months

*Clutch Size:* 15-30 eggs

**Appearance:**

These tortoises have broad, oval, flattened top shells, or carapaces that are brown to yellow in color and serrated on the edges. The scutes on the carapace have noticeable growth rings. The bottom shell, or plastron, is cream colored. The skin color is yellow-brown and very, very thick. On the rear legs, there are spurs which are not known to serve any particular purpose

**Predators:**

Hatchlings are predated by foxes, dogs, rats and other like-sized predators.

**Population Status:**

Stable



**About the Animal**

African Spur-thigh Tortoises are one of the largest tortoise species in the world, reaching nearly 30 inches from head to tail. They are found in the Sahara Desert of Central Africa and are well adapted to live in this unforgiving landscape. Able to go without drinking water for months at a time, it depends upon its food to provide all the water it requires.

During the heat of the day, these tortoises will find relief from the heat in shallow burrows they dig out of the desert soil. Within the burrow, the animal is able to sleep out of the sun, thus conserving precious water.

Although sometimes selected as a low-maintenance pet, it is important that people understand that these tortoises require special care to remain healthy. Additionally, they are known to live more than 100 years and grow very large

**Mating and Reproduction**

When mating, the male first circles the female and will occasionally ram her with his shell. After mating, the female becomes increasingly restless as she looks for good places to make a nest. Nests are dug out of the soil and she may dig four or five nests before selecting one to lay her eggs in. Once she selects one, an egg is laid every three minutes. Once all the eggs are laid, she will cover them with soil and walk away.

**Amazing Information**

Male spur-thigh tortoises are very aggressive towards one another. They will often ram one another and attempt to flip each other over.



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