



African Spurred Tortoise *Geochelone sulcata*

Description: Also known as the sulcata tortoise. This tortoise is a uniform color of brown to golden yellow. They can be up to 36 inches long and weigh up to 240 lbs. The carapace is dome-shaped and has a notch in the edge over the neck. There are also well-defined spurs on the rear legs, which gives it the name African spurred tortoise. Males are slightly larger than females. They are the largest mainland tortoise in the world (and second only to the giant tortoises of the Galapagos and Aldabra Islands).

Geographic Range/Habitat: They live in the arid fringes of the desert and on savannas. These tortoises are found in the Southern Sahara desert region ranging from Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Sudan and Ethiopia.

Behavior: Males reach sexual maturity when the carapace is about 35 cm in diameter. They are very aggressive toward each other especially during breeding time. Males will ram each other repeatedly. Breeding can take place anytime from March through June. Females will nest in the autumn and can lay a clutch of 15-30 eggs. The eggs incubate underground for about eight months. When they hatch, tortoises are only about 2 inches in length. African spurred tortoises can live up to 70 years.

Diet: Grasses, succulent plants. They rely on plants to provide most of their water.

Status: Listed as vulnerable due to habitat loss and collection for the pet trade.

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