

FRAGILE ARMOUR PLATING

European tortoises look robust and unassuming. But appearances can be deceptive - above all where nutrition is involved, these little tanks are very sensitive. But also on the topic of breeding, ambitious tortoise keepers have a lot of questions... and the experts from the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo have the answers.

PET POINTERS



with Maxi Zoo

The male circles the female, presses hard against her, rams or bites her in the head and flanks until she's ready to mate. This can to some extent proceed so fiercely that it sometimes results in severe injuries to the female. That's why you should keep the sexes apart during this season and in each

case always introduce a female in heat to a male in his enclosure.

WHAT SHOULD YOU FEED TORTOISES?

European tortoises are highly specialised vegetarians. For the ideal nourishment you should best provide these creatures with high-fibre, fresh weed such as dandelion, ribwort and common plantains, shepherd's purse or lucerne. Feed with older rather than younger plants as they contain more crude fibre and are richer in minerals. For variety you can also give them lettuce or weed-rich hay. Because tortoises need an ample supply of calcium for building up a healthy shell, you should offer them additional chalk in the form of cuttlefish bones or mussel grit. You shouldn't give fruit to tortoises more often than once a week otherwise they could get diarrhoea. Animal fare such as cat food is taboo as this leads to gout over the long term and an agonising death.

WHEN DOES THE MATING SEASON START?

From April / May the males start wooing a suitable partner.

WHERE DO FEMALE TORTOISES LAY THEIR EGGS?

The female searches out a location which has a loose soil structure and a high level of solar radiation in which to lay her eggs. This is why you should make such a place available to the creature within the enclosure, e.g. in the form of a laying mound. Normally, the sun would then take over the job of incubating the eggs. Because the temperatures in our part of the world are too low as a rule, the eggs have to be bedded in an incubator in the way they are obtained from a specialist pet shop. Take care that the eggs do not roll over during transport as the embryo can be crushed by the yolk. A good idea is to mark the upper side of the egg with a soft pencil.

HOW OLD CAN A TORTOISE BECOME?

Well looked after, European tortoises can reach an age of 60 to 80 years old. So bear this in mind: tortoises like to be bequeathed!



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