

SWALLOW AQUATICS CARE SHEET

Leopard tortoises - *Geochelone pardalis babcocki*

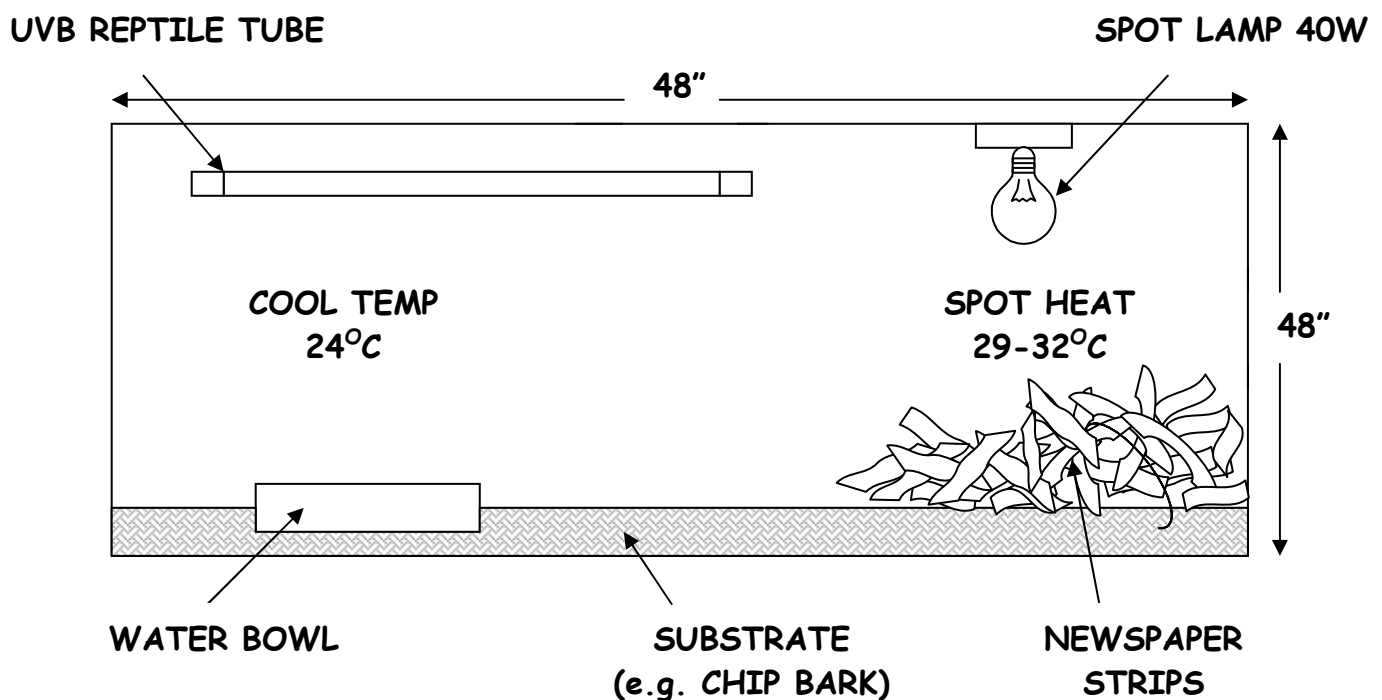
- Indoor vivariums

Leopard tortoises are African scrubland tortoises, which spend the majority of their natural lives living in open grassy plains. In captivity they require spacious enclosures both inside and outside (weather permitting). Smaller/juvenile individuals can be maintained for the cold part of the year in large wooden vivariums, equipped with heating and full spectrum lighting. The heat lamp and UVB tubes should be on for a maximum of 10-12 hours per day.

A water bowl must be provided which is large enough for the tortoise to climb in and out of. This should be cleaned regularly and filled with clean fresh water.

A dry substrate can be used to cover the floor of the vivarium (e.g. chip bark). This should be replaced when it becomes dirty.

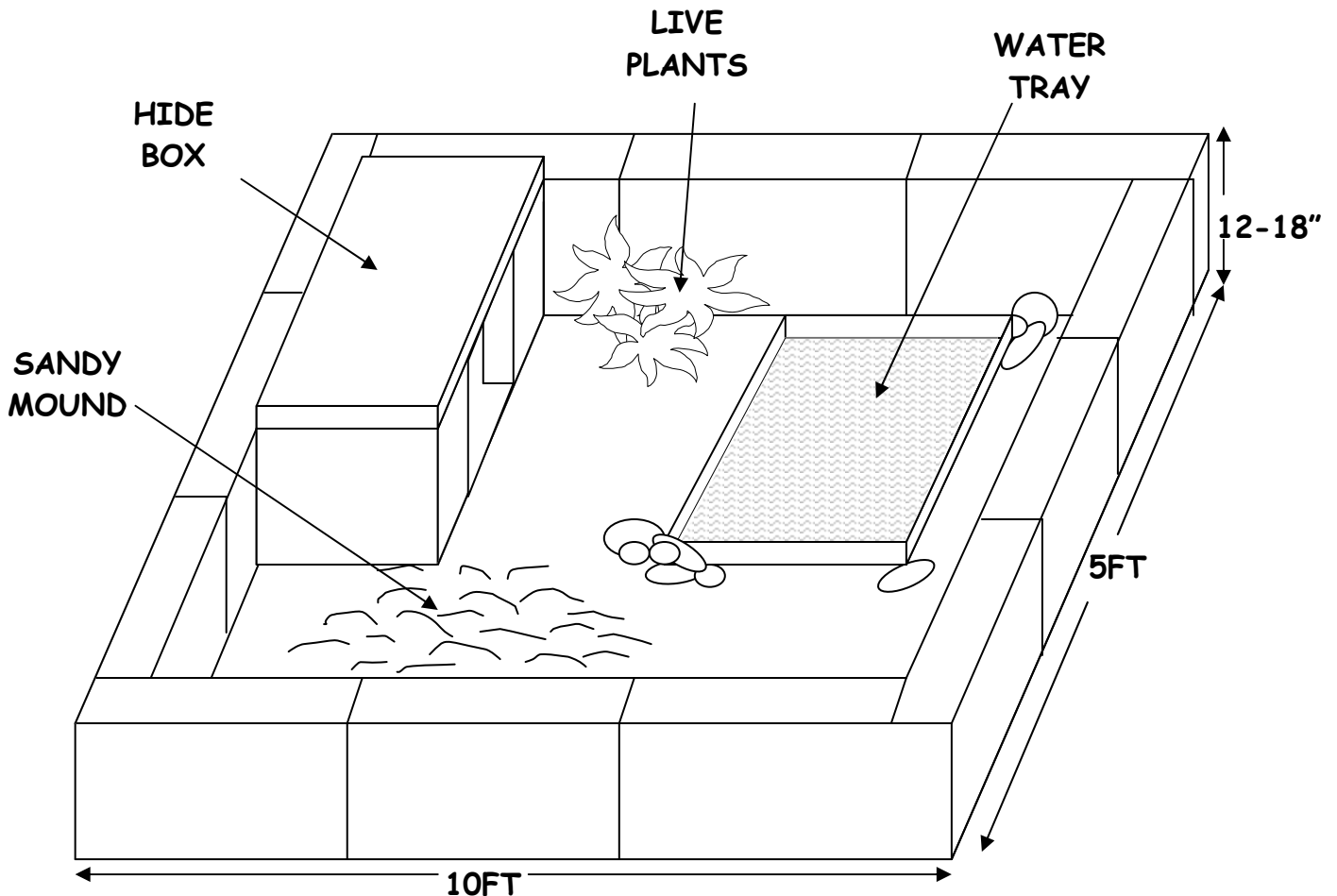
Shredded newspaper can be used to provide a hiding place for the tortoise. Alternatively a hide box or cardboard tube can be used.



- Outdoor pen enclosure

As with the indoor vivarium a shallow water bowl/tray and hide box should be provided in the outdoor pen. The hide box will also provide a shelter for the tortoise from the wind and rain.

Live plants and sand/soil mounds can also be included in the outdoor pen. Care should be taken to protect the outdoor enclosure from predators such as foxes, dogs and cats also from escape. Horsfield tortoises are excellent diggers.



- Feeding

Leopard tortoises are a herbivorous species which feed predominantly on high fibre, low protein vegetation in their natural environment. In fact the main part of their diet in the wild is grasses and usually dry ones at that.

It is essential to follow this diet in captivity; high fibre diets are essential for long term health.

A recommended diet would include high proportions of edible weeds such as clover, sow thistle, plantains, chickweed and most definitely

garden grasses, access to natural grazing would be the most effective way to provide the above.

During the colder months when natural grass will be hard to find be sure to stick to farm produce which is still high in fibre. Items such as spring greens, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and watercress etc.

Fruit should not be fed on a regular basis since high sugar levels can cause digestive upsets and promote digestive parasites. As a treat or source of dietary moisture tomatoes and cucumber can be fed but only in moderation.

A good quality calcium supplement should be added regularly to food - Vetark Nutrobal is a good choice. Calcium is very important for tortoises, good bone and shell structure rely on it. Other calcium additives include dried crushed egg shell, cuttle fish bone and oyster shell poultry grit.

- Hibernation

These tortoises **DO NOT** hibernate

- Additional Information

It is important to find a knowledgeable veterinarian, although with proper care and attention tortoises should rarely become sick. Reptile diseases can overcome their hosts very quickly and therefore speed in diagnosis and treatment is essential. Many vets will try and treat tortoises without actually knowing a great deal about them. Good quality books on the subject are very useful for reference. Some good books available include;

Andy C Highfield Encyclopedia of Tortoises and Terrapins.
(Carapace Press)

Joining tortoise groups and clubs is also a good idea.

Two very good ones in the UK Are;

The Tortoise Trust
BM Tortoise
London
WC1N 3XX

The British Chelonia Society
PO Box 2163
London
NW10 5HW

Also help and advice on any of the above can always be obtained from Swallow Aquatics between 9am and 6pm seven days a week.

Tel: 01206 210360