

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUNLIGHT

Without adequate UV rays from natural sunlight a resulting lack of vitamin D3 does not allow tortoises to absorb calcium that is needed for proper bone and shell health. Calcium will be leached out of the bones and shell to support the needs of the rest of the body. The shell will become soft and will eventually cave in, restricting internal organs and even damaging the spine. Growth will be stunted, and the lifespan will be significantly decreased. Renal failure occurs in extreme cases. Commercially available UV bulbs are an extremely expensive and less effective alternative. Even though the bulb may burn for much longer, effective UV rays cease to be emitted after a period of about 6 months.

Proper diet is crucial to proper growth and a healthy tortoise. An animal's natural diet should be strictly adhered to. Too many high water content vegetables or excessive protein can have disastrous long term effects which may not be apparent in the short term. Dry grasses should make up 90-95% of the diet of most tortoises from arid and semi- arid regions. Veggies should only be offered only as "treats" on an occasional basis.



This G. sulcata has suffered from lack of sunlight and an improper diet resulting in stunted growth, a collapsed carapace and moderate spinal damage.



This G. sulcata succumbed to renal failure resulting from metabolic bone disease.