

Daily Care Checklist

A printable routine for keeping a pet tortoise healthy. Built around forest and grassland species — adjust temperature and humidity targets to match yours.

Morning (5–10 minutes)

- ☐ Turn on UVB and basking lights
Check the timer is firing on schedule — 12 hours on / 12 hours off.
- ☐ Confirm basking temp 90–95°F and cool side 72–78°F
Use a temp gun on the basking spot, not the air.
- ☐ Check humidity reading on hygrometer
Forest species 70–90%, grassland species 40–60%.
- ☐ Refill water dish with fresh, lukewarm water
Dump, rinse, refill. Daily, no exceptions.
- ☐ Mist substrate and humid hide
Damp, not soaking. Soak sphagnum in the hide weekly.
- ☐ Visual health check
Clear eyes, dry nostrils, alert posture, smooth shell. Note anything odd.

Feeding

- ☐ Chop fresh greens (80%+ of diet)
Mulberry, hibiscus, dandelion, romaine, endive, spring mix. Vary daily.
- ☐ Add fruit only if species-appropriate
Small portion for forest species; minimal/none for grassland species.
- ☐ Dust with calcium (no D3 if UVB present)
3–4 times per week. Multivitamin once weekly.
- ☐ Provide cuttlebone in enclosure
Free-choice calcium between meals.
- ☐ Remove uneaten food within 4 hours
Prevents mold, fruit flies, and bacterial growth.

Hydration & soaks

- ☐ Soak hatchlings daily / juveniles 3–4×/week / adults 1–2×/week
Lukewarm water (about 85°F), shell-deep, for 15–20 minutes.
- ☐ Towel dry and return to warm side after soak
Never put a wet tortoise under a cool draft.

Evening

- ☐ Spot-clean substrate (poop, urates, food bits)
Full substrate change every 4–6 weeks.
- ☐ Confirm lights off / nighttime heat source on if needed
Nighttime drop to 65–72°F is healthy; supplemental heat only if it drops lower.
- ☐ Log weight weekly and notes daily
Use the journal or a notebook by the enclosure.

Weekly & monthly

- ☐ Weekly: deep-clean water and food dishes with hot water
No soap residue.
- ☐ Weekly: weigh tortoise (grams) and log
Sudden loss of 10%+ → vet.
- ☐ Monthly: inspect shell, beak, nails, vent
Beak overgrowth, soft shell, swollen eyes = vet visit.
- ☐ Every 12 months: replace UVB tube
Even if it still emits visible light, UVB output drops off.

Tip: print this checklist and clip it near the enclosure. Re-check anything marked monthly on the first of the month.