

Individual Animal Handling

Radiated Tortoise

(Astrochelys radiata)

Category: Tier II Tortoise

Allowed Usage: Twice a day up to 3 days in a row. Maximum 20 minutes per public encounter with at least 2 hours between encounters.

Temperature Requirements: High: 90 F, Low: 70F. No transport if over 95F or below 20F.

Equipment: Cooler, newspaper bedding, and hand sanitizer.

Crating: Always wash or sanitize hands before and after handling each animal to remove smells.

- Have cooler ready and open to receive tortoise once you have it out.
- If the tortoise is beneath a hide or behind an object like a water bowl, remove hide and any other furniture that is in the way.
- Hold horizontally with a two-hand grip or “hamburger hold.”
- Put in cooler and secure.
- If water dish or hide was removed, return both to enclosure.
- Sign animal out on the Ambassador Animal Usage Sheet.
- Place removable ID tag onto the cooler.

Transport: Ensure that outdoor temperature is within temperature requirements before transporting outdoors.

- Carry cooler with both hands or use a cart. Do not tilt or swing cooler in transport.
- Never expose a cooler (with animal inside or not) to prolonged sunlight, heat, or cold.

Handling: Always wash or sanitize hands before and after handling each animal.

- Set the tortoise on the ground and allow it to roam. Be aware of the position of the tortoise and guests.
- If the tortoise needs to be moved, hold horizontally with a two-hand grip or “hamburger hold.”
- Allow the public to touch gently on the tortoise’s shell. Handlers can recommend using the two-finger touch.
- Do not let public touch head or legs or tap on the shell.
- Do not allow tortoise to feed on any vegetation in the area.
- Enable guests to use hand sanitizer following their experience.

Return Animal:

- Return animal to proper enclosure.
- Ensure locks are secure.
- Sign animal back in and make comments on Ambassador Animal Usage sheet.
- Return removable ID tag to the enclosure.

Clean up:

- Remove and throwaway newspaper bedding (if used).
- Rinse inside of cooler with water and scrub away any feces or organic matter. Spray with bleach solution.
- Return cooler to proper location.
- Wash hands.

Special Notes:

- The female Radiated tortoises exhibit pyramiding, which is a deformity of the shell that results in the scutes being raised in a pyramid shape. Pyramiding can be caused by excess protein, insufficient calcium, and improper humidity levels. Factors leading to pyramiding have the largest effect on the shell in the first few years of life. Pyramiding does not affect quality of life.

Individuals:

- Chris: Male, May 29, 1998
- DJ: Male
- Trovan: Female
- Unnamed: Female
- Unnamed: Female