



Brumation (Hibernation) When an Outdoor Burrow Is Not Available

If the outdoor burrow becomes flooded or is not ready for your tortoise, you can provide a substitute wintering place like an unheated room or garage if the temperature on the floor stays between 35° and 50° F.

For adults and sub-adults, place each in a large cardboard box with several sections of newspaper on the bottom. Avoid towels or other cloth. Tortoises can become entangled, and not be able to free themselves, especially small tortoises with their very long nails. Avoid shredded paper and straw. The box should have a lid that closes loosely to allow some air exchange. Place a thermometer on the floor of the larger box. Place the box on the floor where it is convenient for you to check the tortoise and the temperature occasionally and where you can hear any restlessness.

For hatchling and small tortoises, depending upon the number you are placing together, make a mock burrow out of a cardboard box that fits over the tortoise(s) and just clears the top and sides of the shell but is several body lengths long. Tortoises like snugness and it helps to conserve moisture. Remove the bottom of the mock burrow. Cut an opening in one of the short sides for the door. Place this box inside a large box with high sides and enough bottom area to allow the tortoises to move out of the mock burrow into the large box if they become restless.

In the desert, wild hatchlings hibernate the first winter. Your hatchlings can do it, too. It is the natural thing for them. In an outdoor burrow there is little risk of dehydration that there is indoors. If you need an alternative, use a cold, indoor setting with the same double box arrangement for hatchlings and other small tortoises that is suggested above. However, use soil on the floor of the box. This will allow the tortoises to snug into it inside the inner box. Newspaper is slick and will cause muscle strain when the light tortoises walk about. Wintering several small tortoises together is acceptable. Larger tortoises should be in separate boxes.

See **Hibernation/Brumation** in the **Tortoise Group Booklet, Desert Tortoises Adoption and Care** on this website about what behavior to expect from your tortoise. Important locations and temperatures are discussed further.