



TORTOISE TIDBITS

WHAT IF I FIND A TORTOISE ON THE ROAD?

If you spot a wild desert tortoise in its native habitat, it is very important that you not touch or handle it.

The ONLY time it is okay to touch a wild tortoise is in an emergency situation where you encounter a desert tortoise on a road, and in imminent danger of being hit by a vehicle.

If you encounter this situation, please follow these 3 steps:

1. Go low and slow – move the tortoise keeping it low to the ground, and move it slowly.
2. Move the tortoise in the direction it was already moving.
3. Place the tortoise in a shady spot 50-100 feet off the road.



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The Desert Managers Group (DMG) is a partnership of county, state and federal agencies working together to conserve and enhance the California desert for current and future generations.
www.dmg.gov



The Living Desert is a remarkable zoo and botanical garden representing the deserts of North America and Africa. Its mission is desert conservation through preservation, education and appreciation.



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MY PET DESERT TORTOISE CAN IT BE A THREAT TO WILD TORTOISES?





KEEP WILD TORTOISES WILD AND CAPTIVE TORTOISES CAPTIVE

CAPTIVE TORTOISES CAN BE A SERIOUS THREAT TO WILD POPULATIONS OF DESERT TORTOISES.

- Captive desert tortoises often carry contagious diseases, such as Upper Respiratory Tract Disease (URTD) that can spread to wild populations and be fatal!
- URTD contributed to the listing of the desert tortoise under the Endangered Species Act.

IT IS ILLEGAL TO TAKE A WILD TORTOISE HOME AS A "PET" AS WELL AS TO RELEASE A CAPTIVE TORTOISE INTO THE WILD.

- Wild desert tortoises are a threatened species and are protected by federal law.
- Desert tortoises are vital to the health of the desert habitat they call home, and the removal of a tortoise from the wild can have serious impacts to the overall population.
- Because of captive tortoises' high likelihood of carrying and transmitting diseases such as URTD, it is also illegal to release a captive tortoise into the wild.



NOTE:

If you live outside of the state of California, other state laws may apply. Check with your local state agencies for rules and regulations pertaining to desert tortoises.



CAPTIVE TORTOISES

There are two simple rules you can follow to be a responsible captive desert tortoise "foster home," and in turn, help the wild population of these amazing creatures.

RULE #1: DO NOT ALLOW CAPTIVE DESERT TORTOISES TO BREED.

- Tortoises born in captivity cannot be released into the wild due to the high chance that they can carry/transmit diseases.
- Back-yard breeding does not help the species recover: it only increases the already large population of captive tortoises that need to be fostered, and it is highly discouraged by state and federal wildlife agencies.
- Desert tortoise "foster homes" are encouraged to keep only one sex of tortoise, or to keep male and female tortoises in separate holding areas to prevent breeding in captivity.

RULE #2: DO NOT SELL, GIVE AWAY OR RELEASE YOUR CAPTIVE TORTOISE INTO THE WILD.

- Keeping your desert tortoise safely in captivity helps stop the spread of diseases that are often fatal to wild tortoises.
- Remember, it is illegal to release captive tortoises into the wild!



If you can no longer care for your captive tortoise, or if you have baby tortoises, you can go to LivingDesert.org/Education/Tortoise for information on how to re-home or legally foster your desert tortoise.



HOW CAN I HELP WILD DESERT TORTOISES?

Desert tortoises have survived in California's deserts for thousands of years and play a vital role in the overall health of the desert. By knowing the facts about captive desert tortoises and the danger they can be to wild desert tortoises, you can help protect this vital species.



SPREAD THE WORD

KEEP WILD TORTOISES WILD AND CAPTIVE TORTOISES CAPTIVE.

- This helps prevent the spread of disease to the wild population.

HANDS OFF!

- Desert tortoises are walking canteens! They can store water in their bladders and resorb that water as needed, helping them survive.
- When wild tortoises are picked up, they may get frightened and void their bladder, putting their life at risk by losing that water supply.

KEEP THE DESERT CLEAN.

- Trash and food scraps left in the desert by humans attract ravens, a known predator of desert tortoises.
- Putting your trash in covered and secured trash receptacles, or packing it in and out helps keep raven populations down.