



13600 County Road 11 ~ Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 ~ USA
Phone (952)432-9661
After Hours call (952)953-3737
www.ValleyViewVet.com

Russian Tortoise Diet

GREENS

Most grocery stores have a decent selection of greens that Russians readily eat. Ideally the greens should be organic and pesticide free. However this is the real world and not all tortoise keepers have access to "ideal" food. So, I have this section as a starting point for a varied diet. The following greens are easily found in local stores:

Romaine lettuce
Red and green leaf lettuce
Endive
Escarole
Radicchio
Turnip greens
Mustard greens
Collards
Spring Mix (mixed salad greens)
cabbage
Green Beans

With the above veggies one can develop a good diet. Once again (and I can't stress this enough) variety is the key! Don't feed the same food day in and day out. Mix varieties and choose a different green as the basis every few days.

OTHER GOOD CHOICES

Some other favorites of my tortoises that are available:

Hibiscus (flowers and leaves)
Hosta
Sedum
Mulberry leaves
Hen and Chicks
Ice Plants
Prickly pear flowers, fruit and pads (burn the spines off)
Dandelion
Plantain (not the banana type fruit....the weed plantago major)
Mallow (flowers and leaves)
Henbit
Rose (flowers and leaves....make sure no systemic pesticides were used)
Chrysanthemum flowers
Cornflowers Plagiobothrys ssp
Forsythia (flowers and leaves)
Dayflower Commelina diffusa (flowers and leaves)
Californian Poppy escholzia
Make sure all are pesticide and herbicide free.

AVOID

The following food items should be avoided for a variety of reasons. there are many books and groups that go into great detail.

too much fruit (although fruit is often recommended, its sugar content can lead to parasite blooms....just not worth it) the exception is apples due to the high quantity of pectin....but still not daily.
Iceberg lettuce

Bok Choy

All grains (including bread, pasta etc)

Dog and cat food

Meat

All human food except what's been listed as "good"

ANTI-NUTRIENTS

A number of food items contain chemicals that interfere with a tortoise's ability to absorb nutrients from food.

Although most food items have some of these...a varied diet can minimize the harmful effects.

(more info can be found at [Cornell University Poisonous Plants Informational Database](#))

Oxalic Acid:

This is a naturally occurring element in many plants and imparts a bitter taste in greens such as mustard greens. This substance binds minerals...

the most important being calcium. It binds with minerals which must be eliminated through the kidneys. In large amounts (or in small quantities

with improper hydration) can lead to kidney stones and kidney damage. Avoid rhubarb and beet greens....limit spinach,

Phytic Acid: This is found in high concentration in peas, beans and cereals. This chemical also binds minerals as well as proteins.

Tannins:

Although tannins are beneficial for the most part, in large quantities (as with all anti-nutrients) they bind protein and interfere with digestion.

Purines:

Purines are well known in humans as being a contributing factor in gout. Russian tortoises fed large amounts can develop kidney disease.

Goitrogens:

This compound is implicated in the development of enlarged thyroid glands (Goiters). They interfere with the uptake of iodine. Limit the quantities of kale, mustard, and other cruciferous plants.