



# Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital



## Waking up your tortoise after hibernation

After a hibernation period of a maximum of 3 months your Mediterranean tortoise will be ready to wake up from hibernation. Here are a few pointers to help avoid post hibernation anorexia and other problems associated with waking up from hibernation.

Waking up doesn't need to happen slowly, ideally the tortoise should be removed from its hibernation accommodation which has been kept at 4 – 7C and kept at room temperature for a few hours before being placed back into its vivarium or tortoise table. After a few hours and before being placed back into its house you should bathe your tortoise in warm water, ideally with an electrolyte replacer like ReptoBoost. Bathing should be carried out every day until your tortoise passes normal faeces and urine.

Once bathed and returned to its normal accommodation check that your heat source is set to the correct temperature for the species. Many problems associated with poor tortoise recovery from hibernation is a failure to provide adequate heating when waking up. Night time temperature should be monitored and **should not fall below around 18C** to prevent the tortoise attempted to return to hibernation. Night time temperature is particularly important as the focal heat source should be turned off to mimic the action of the sun, a secondary heat source is advised to keep the ambient vivarium temperature at the correct temperature.

There are many problems associated with poor brumation or hibernation in reptiles. These include post hibernation conjunctivitis, neurological problems, liver problems and post hibernation/brumation anorexia specifically in tortoises. Leucopenia, a problem with white blood cells is also common and causes a compromised immune system leaving these pets susceptible to other infections.



# Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital

## Post hibernation care

The main areas to concentrate on after you've woken your tortoise up is correct heating and ensuring the tortoise is not dehydrated, this is often achieved through bathing in electrolyte baths every day as the tortoise may drink from the bath water. Fresh water should always be provided.

**It is very important that food is not offered until the tortoise has toileted.** Green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, broccoli, iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, cabbage, bok choy, turnip greens, endive, mange tout, spring greens, Brussel sprouts, carrots (grated) can be offered. Naturally grown weeds such as dandelion, grass, sow thistle, plantains, chickweed, milk thistles, sedum, honeysuckle, nasturtium flowers, hibiscus flowers or wild pansy are an exceptionally good food source as well.

## Post hibernation care checklist

- Remove tortoise from hibernation box/den
- Keep at room temperature for a few hours
- Bathe in warm water and electrolytes if possible
- Place back in to vivarium or tortoise table being careful to check the temperature settings, including that of a secondary source are right for the species
  - Bathe the tortoise every day until urine is passed
  - Once urine has been passed start to offer food
  - Return the tortoise to a normal routine once eating

If your tortoise fails to wake up and return to normal activity, shows any signs of ill health including 'runny nose syndrome', breathing problems, anorexia, listlessness, inactivity or attempting to go back into hibernation then **please contact us on 01325 380111 as soon as you can.**