

Reinventing Tortoise Group for the 21st Century

Open letter to Tortoise Group's 1800 newsletter recipients:

Tortoise Group has come to a crossroad: either reinvent Tortoise Group for the new age or struggle to provide services with a diminishing number of volunteers.

What's the situation? Thousands of tortoises in Clark County are neglected simply because owners do not know about proper tortoise care. The word is not getting out. Also, over the last ten years Tortoise Group has expanded services tremendously, yet in the past few years attendance at meetings and, therefore, the number of new volunteers has continually decreased. We seem to be losing ground.

Question: What are we going to do about it?

Answer: Hold brainstorming workshops to figure out who we are, what we are about, and where we are going.

Twenty-five people wrestled with questions and possibilities at two brainstorming sessions in February. We've made a little progress---we need you to make the leap to solutions. Help dream up ways to create a vital, dynamic Tortoise Group for the 21st century. Our future is up to you.

Make Tortoise Group a priority! Come to the next brainstorming session at the first Tortoise Group meeting of the season on Saturday, March 20, 1:00-3:00 pm at the Nevada State Museum in Lorenzi Park.

Betty Burge

If you can't make it but have

some ideas, call or email me. Phone and Fax 702-739-8043 tortoisegroup@worldnet.att.net

Satellite Seller Sought

If you live in the southwest area of town and would consider selling MegaDiet from your home, please call Betty at 739-8043 to learn what's involved.

Wild Tortoise Food

Interested in growing wild tortoise food plants? Try the following website as a source of a desert tortoise seed mixture: www.theodorepayne.org/store.htm

Why We Need to Get the Word Out about Proper Tortoise Care!

Spring Events

Brainstorming Meeting

March 20

1 - 3 pm

Nevada State Museum & Historical Society
Lorenzi Park
at 95 & Valley View

Summerlin Earthfaire

April 17

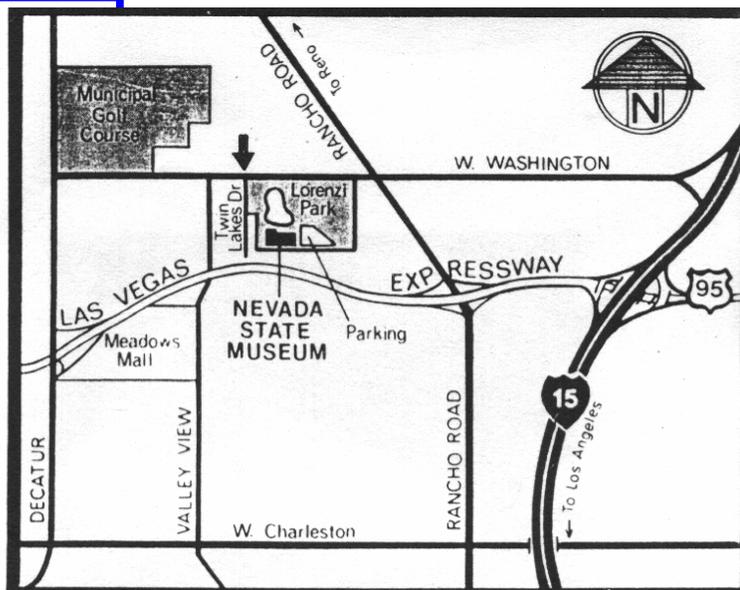
10 - 3 pm

Summerlin Centre Park
on Town Center between
Charleston & Sahara

Live musical entertainment, interactive displays, children's environmental art and learning

inside...

Why We Need to Get the Word Out about Tortoise Care...
Get Involved with Tortoise Group...
MegaDiet Sales Locations...
Members' Corner...
Membership Application...
Tortoise Pools or Fish P...



Betty put together these gory examples of tortoise neglect, thinking perhaps some people are unaware of what she sees are hears all the time.

Tortoise kept in aquarium with water covering the bottom, now full of bleeding sores and eroded skin. Kept in a cage and now with torn nails and continuous frustration trying to get out. Dog chewed off limbs and shell edges with exposed nerves raw and bloodied. Tossed about, kicked like a soccer ball or hit using a baseball bat by children. Fed lettuce and kept indoors and now with a collapsed shell, deformed jaw, swollen eyelids and inability to carry its weight and move out of the sunshine; unable to eat because it cannot see.

An adult with rotting skin falling off and the owner refuses to see it as a problem. Babies put in coat pockets and taken on family trips. Dogs that harass so tortoise spends what little time it is outside with extremities pulled in, not eating and stressed to say the least. Four near-adult tortoises kept in a child's sandbox. Babies kept in a child's plastic swimming pool with no burrow. Three or even five-year-old tortoises managing to stay alive in a small aquarium, indoors. One lived in a basket for several years and was in terrible health. Tortoise died having become caught among stored bicycles and tricycles. Families who let their two-year-old beat on the tortoise with a toy as we stand talking. Unattended child placed the tortoises in the

child's wading pool with water and tortoise drowned. Family did not take the suggestion to remove volleyball netting from the ground between uses and the tortoise became entangled, could not escape the sun and died of overheating. Did accept the suggestion that the pool maintenance machinery area was full of hazards and needed to be blocked off. It was done before adoption but later removed, and the tortoise became caught and died of overheating.

Federal law enforcement staff will not confiscate abused captive tortoises, so they receive less protection than cats

and dogs. Those hatched before 1989 have no protection. Those hatched after listing in 1989 have protection on paper but not in practice when it comes to abusive keepers.

**Tortoise Adoptions
and Consultations
Are Free
Call 739-8043**

Tortoise Group Information by e-mail

Tortoise Group now offers two services by e-mail:

- 1) Newsletter and 2) Notices of upcoming meetings and other events or topics of interest.

If you wish to sign up for either of these services, please send your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number to Kathy at utiger@juno.com and specify List 1 or List 2.

MEGADIET Satellite Sellers

Please call sellers for appointment.

Charleston & Rancho	Carolyn – 878-4297
Charleston & Nellis	Ruby – 431-0576
Washburn & Allen	Kim – 435-5769
(after 4:30 pm M-F, all day Sat & Sun)	
Summerlin Area	Cathy – 256-3817
(3:30 – 8 pm M-F, all day Sat & Sun)	
Tropicana & Maryland	Betty – 739-8043
Henderson, 89015	Laurie – 558-6985
(after 12:00 noon)	
Pahrump	Sheri – 775-727-5557
Out-of-town orders	Betty – 739-8043

A 1½ lb bag costing \$8.00 lasts a large tortoise about one month. MegaDiet is also sold at monthly Tortoise Group meetings.

**10% discount to TG members
who show their cards**

Treasurer Trilla Newton

Members

Ernestine Hembree, Rich Ruocco,
Jerry Shupe, Susan Stater, Kathy
Utiger

The Tortoise Group newsletter is
published three times yearly:

March, May, and August

List 1: Receive by e-mail the newsletter and notices of events

List 2: Receive by e-mail notices of events but continue to receive the newsletter in hard-copy form.

Get Involved with Tortoise Group!

- Like to work with children?
Help share the fun during presentations to school classes.
- Like to work with plants?
Help prepare tortoise habitats in school yards.
- Like to see tortoises adopted to yards that are ready to meet the tortoises' needs?
Help with yard visits and explain to families how to prepare to adopt a tortoise.
- Want to work alone, on your own time, a few hours a year?
Keep a group of libraries and veterinary clinics supplied with our care pamphlet?
- Have ideas for enlisting new members?
Join the membership committee.
- Want to help at our display table at outdoor events and talk with visitors about tortoise care?
Just sign up!
- Want to sell MegaDiet from your home? Pick your own hours.
Call Betty!
- Want to help direct Tortoise Group to success in the 21st Century?
Join the Board of Directors.

- Have editing experience and would like to be the editor of the Tortoise Group newsletter or create new Tortoise Group publications?
Give us a call.

- Have experience or interest in working with the media, writing ads, contacting avenues through which Tortoise Group can advertise.
Great!

- Want to develop ways to enlist greater attendance at our monthly programs?
Send us an email.
- Have experience in fund raising? Additional funds will be needed in several different ways for us to grow.

Call . . . and come to the next brainstorming meeting.

Moving?

If you are moving out of state and your tortoise was adopted from Tortoise Group, please notify us. If you have someone in mind to adopt the tortoise, it will be safe at the Tortoise Holding Facility until that person is ready and we have checked their yard. If the tortoise was not adopted from Tortoise Group you may give it away, but please see that the yard is prepared before you do that. We can advise the person of your choice.

If you are moving to northern Nevada you may take your tortoise, but contact the **RENO TUR-TOISE CLUB** at 775-972-8532 for information about keeping the tortoise

healthy in a climate to which it is not adapted.

If you are moving to another location in southern Nevada and want advice about preparing your new yard, read over our care pamphlet again. Tortoises have escaped or died within hours after moving to a new home because the yard was not made safe and secure.

If you are moving to Utah, it is now legal to have a pet tortoise except in Washington, Kane, and Iron counties, the only counties where wild tortoises naturally occur. The restriction is due to the possibility for disease to be transmitted to wild tortoises if some unthinking person released a captive into the wild or allowed one to escape and it found its way into the wild. You may contact the Utah Division of Natural Resources for details. We hope that you all know that to release any tortoise into the wild, anywhere, without U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permission is illegal.

If you are moving to California or Arizona, contact the Nevada Department of Wildlife for the procedure that will ensure that your tortoises are not confiscated.

Adoption of the Physically Challenged

If you know anyone who has no tortoises and is thinking of adopting, let them know that we like to find homes for physically challenged tortoises.

The Desert Tortoise Holding Facility usually has one or two for which Tortoise Group is authorized to find homes. One now available is only physically challenged in having a strangely formed shell.

Spring Doings

New tortoise owners may appreciate a few reminders about what to do for your tortoise when it finally emerges in March or April. The earlier

in the season it gets up and starts to bask for a few hours a day the longer it may be before it starts eating. Wait until the tortoise starts eating grass and flowers. That will tell you it is ready for MegaDiet.

- Check the list of Satellite Sellers of MegaDiet in this newsletter. Buy some, put it in the refrigerator, not the freezer, and have it ready for your tortoise.
- Before your tortoise awakens, get those dandelions transplanted. Don't wait too long. Print out Information Sheet #13 from our Website or send us a self-addressed, stamped envelope and request that sheet. Dandelions need all the help they can get to become established. Don't worry. They do not take over. Come summer you will have a hard time seeing them in the grass.
- Give your tortoise a soak in a basin with lukewarm water that does not come up to the nose as the tortoise stands in the basin. Do not leave the tortoise. It may just soak or may also drink. When drinking, the snout may stay under water for

15-20 minutes! When it tries to climb out of the basin remove it, dry it completely, and set it in the sun.

- Check to see that the eyes are open and are clear of discharge or cloudiness.
- Give the body a good looking over for any sores. Open sores can attract flies and maggots are a real threat.
- Dust off any ticks into a bucket of soapy water using a dry toothbrush.
- If you think your tortoise has a health problem, we have a list of 16 veterinarians in the Las Vegas valley who take care of tortoise problems. That list is also on the website, Information Sheet # 24.
- Cockroaches sharing the burrow are keeping it tidy. They are no problem for the tortoise. If you are concerned because cockroaches or ants are coming in your house, have a reputable pest spraying service just spray the corner where the base of the house meets the ground or pavement. Do not spray the foliage. Tortoises are very sensitive to poisons and total yard spraying will be killing helpful insects as well as those you think you don't want. For years we have been asking home owners that we visit prior to adoption how they keep their flowers so beautiful, and rarely does anyone say that they use pest sprays or bait. After 31 years of yard visits, we feel that those gardeners have good advice for the rest of us.

Information Sheets on Website

Information Sheets #1 – 26 are now posted on our Website

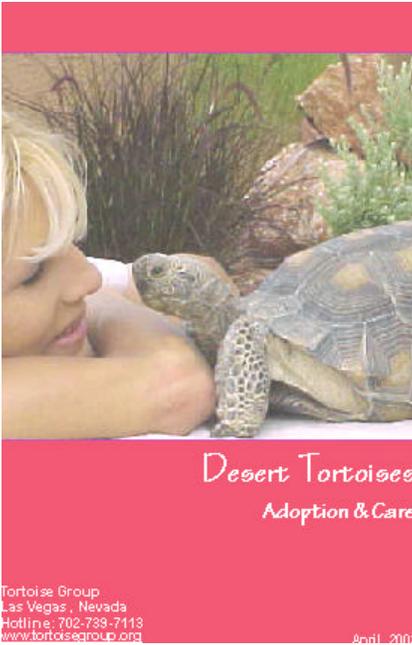
www.tortoisegroup.org. Those of you without Internet access can order by mail. Write the #'s of the sheets you want, and include a self-addressed envelope with a 37-cent stamp on it for each four Information Sheets. Send your request to: Tortoise Group, 5157 Poncho Circle, Las Vegas, NV 89119

Members' Corner

Tortoise Care Pamphlet 2003 Available

The new color edition of Tortoise Group's "bible," *Desert Tortoises: Adoption and Care*, can now be found at all local veterinarians and libraries. This edition is not yet available on the Website.

Be an advocate for the tortoise. Pick up some copies of the new pamphlet to share with friends who have tortoises. You will be surprised at all the new and useful information on feeding, habitat design, burrow building, medical care, and photos.



Desert Tortoises, Adoption and Care 2003 edition is packed with new information

Memberships Are Due Now

Please send in your annual membership dues now. We need to know that you care about and support Tortoise Group. Thank you.

New members receive a free Tortoise Group cap or tote bag

ponds present the same problem even if they have a rock wall around them. Tortoises are curious and great climbers.

Tortoise Group Membership Form

Memberships and contributions may be tax deductible

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Send my newsletter by email
 Send my newsletter in hard copy,
 and send meeting notices and other news by e-mail

Renewing member New member

Note: For Life members, memberships expire each December 31

Special skills/Interests _____

	Individual	15.00	_____
	Family	25.00	_____
	Sustaining	35.00	_____
	Sponsor	50.00	_____
	Corporate	75.00	_____
	Life	200.00	_____
	Additional Contribution		_____
	Total Amount Enclosed		_____

**Make check payable to Tortoise Group. Mail with application to:
Tortoise Group, 1201 S. Casino Center, Las Vegas, NV 89104**

No Pools or Fish/Turtle Ponds

The Tortoise Group Adoption Committee has finally decided that we will no longer adopt to households with unfenced pools. The last case of drowning reported to us was of a very large, longtime family pet. He was aware of the pool and ignored it for years. Drinking water was always available. The tortoise lived alone in the yard so there was no fighting or courting that could have led to the incident.

Through the years we have adopted to families with pools and sometimes the tortoises do fall in and drown. It did not happen very often but we don't want to put any more tortoises in harm's way. Fish

Websites of Interest

- Tortoise Group www.tortoisegroup.org
- Desert Tortoise Council www.deserttortoise.org
- California Turtle and Tortoise Club
 www.tortoise.org
- Tortoise Trust (United Kingdom and the USA)
 www.tortoisetrust.org
- American tortoise Rescue
(Southern California) www.tortoise.com
- Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (California)
 www.tortoise-tracks.org