



Backyard breeding

One of the biggest issues Tortoise Group faces is backyard breeding. It's a problem for both the pet desert tortoise population, and the wild desert tortoise.

Every year, Tortoise Group gets calls from people wanting to know what to do with desert tortoises they no longer want, or they are moving out of state.

In 2014, we received calls from three people whose spouses had just died. They had been breeding tortoises, and Tortoise Group was left trying to find homes for over 70 tortoises. It's a struggle finding homes for unwanted pet tortoises, and breeding makes the problem worse.

Doesn't breeding tortoises help the numbers in the wild?

No. The desert tortoise is an endangered species in the wild. But breeding them doesn't help, as these pet desert tortoises can't be reintroduced to the desert.

To quarantine, examine, and relocate tortoises is expensive. Also, pets don't do well in the wild, due to their different diet, and lack of fear. We also don't want to introduce disease to the wild population, alter the balance of the ecosystems in which tortoises currently live, or introduce weaker genetic strains into the wild.

But hatchlings are so cute!

Absolutely!

But tortoises need space, and while they may be ok outside for a while, they grow quickly, and most yards don't have enough space for them.

And don't forget, desert tortoises can live to be over 80 years old.

Also, having multiple tortoises means they will continue to breed.

Won't my tortoise be lonely?

No, your desert tortoise prefers to live a solitary lifestyle and is fine with the company of you, your family, and other pets. Many people with multiple tortoises aren't aware of the gender if they are small, and then a few years later, there are hatchlings.

Tortoise Group gets lots of calls from people trying to find homes for hatchlings. And the rule is only one tortoise per household.



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