

Dear Potential Desert Tortoise Caregiver:

Thank you for your interest in adopting a desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). Historically, desert tortoises were removed from the wild for decades, and therefore the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) and its sanctioned desert tortoise adoption facilities always have a surplus of tortoises that need homes. However, we ask that you give considerable thought to being a tortoise caregiver before you apply. A captive tortoise can live up to 100 years, so be aware that a tortoise you adopt may outlive you. Please read the following information carefully and determine whether or not you are able to provide the burrow and yard enclosure a desert tortoise requires, as well as the necessary care and treatment. Desert tortoises are typically only adopted from April 1-September 30 because they hibernate during the cooler months. Often families use the winter months to prepare their tortoise habitat, constructing the burrow and enclosure.

If you decide you would like to adopt a desert tortoise, please read our information on [how to care for a captive desert tortoise](#) and review the [Desert Tortoise Adoption Checklist](#) before you apply to be sure you have fulfilled the requirements. Then, fill out the [Desert Tortoise Adoption Application](#) and return it with the required photo documentation. In some cases, we may request that you give a tortoise adoption expert permission to visit your yard to take a closer look at your tortoise habitat. After you have been approved to adopt a tortoise, we will contact you to make arrangements to pick up your desert tortoise. Your tortoise may be permanently marked so if it becomes lost and then found it can be identified by various animal care agencies or veterinarians. A marked tortoise can be traced back to one of our adoption facilities and returned to you. You may be asked to contribute a small monetary donation when you adopt your desert tortoise to help with the costs of the adoption program.

Any of the state-sanctioned [desert tortoise adoption facilities](#) will accept desert tortoises that can no longer be cared for by adoptive families. Typically, this occurs when adoptive families leave the state or the owner passes away. Desert tortoises cannot be removed from Arizona, so if you are a desert tortoise custodian and are moving from Arizona, you must return the desert tortoise to one of the adoption facilities. **Remember that it is not only illegal to release a captive desert tortoise into the wild, and doing so is detrimental to wild tortoises because it can spread disease and disrupt uniquely adapted genetics in wild populations. It is also illegal and detrimental to desert tortoise populations to collect tortoises from the wild.** Desert tortoises cannot be adopted outside of their natural range. You may adopt a desert tortoise if you live in the greater Kingman, Bullhead City, Lake Havasu, Kingman, Phoenix, Tucson, or Yuma areas. Desert tortoises cannot survive the severe winters that occur in the northeastern or southeastern regions of the state. Contact information for desert tortoise adoption facilities are listed below.

Phoenix: Phoenix Herpetological Society (602) 550-1090; www.phoenixherp.com
Bullhead City / Kingman / Lake Havasu: AGFD Region III Office (928) 692-7700
Yuma: AGFD Region IV Office (928) 342-0091
Tucson: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (520) 883-3062; www.desertmuseum.org/programs/tap.html

If you are still interested in adopting a desert tortoise, now find out how to [care for them in captivity!](#)