



[For immediate release. 17th February 2009]

BLAKE VETERINARY GROUP TREATS GIANT TORTOISE

Staff of the Blake Veterinary Group based in Bridgwater and Burnham on sea were surprised at the size of one of their Bridgwater client's pets, Victor the giant tortoise. "When our client said that they were bringing in a giant tortoise we thought it may be a bit bigger than the usual tortoises we see, which will usually weigh a couple of kilos and be anywhere between 5 and 8 inches in length." Said Vet Richard Bruce. "I thought something was up when the client asked for help carrying "Victor" into the practice." He added.

Victor turned out to be a 40 year old Sulcata tortoise who tipped the scales at just under 30Kg which is about 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ stone. His shell was over 2 feet in length. Victor has three female companions Matilda, Daisy and Peggy who are supermodels and relative lightweights as all weigh around 24 Kg or 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ stone and are just under 2 foot long.

Sulcata tortoises are natives of northern Africa and are the largest of the African mainland tortoise, with specimens reaching 30 inches (75 cm) in length and growing up to 110 pounds (50 kg). The largest on record was a male resident of the Giza Zoological Gardens (Egypt) who weighed in at 232 lb (105.5 kg) and measured 41.6 inches (104 cm) in length

Victor and his friends do not hibernate but live indoors with their owners during the winter, they have a slightly different diet to the more common tortoises, about 70% grass, so you won't need a lawnmower in the summer. This breed of tortoise has real character and makes lovely, if unusual companions. You have to be prepared for a long term commitment when looking after a tortoise, Victor could well live another 40 years but he is unlikely to grow much more.

Victor's owner said "I have brought all my animals to Blakes for years and knowing Richard has a particular interest in reptiles it just made sense for Richard to look after Victor and the girls too"

Vet Richard Bruce said "Victor's owners are currently breeding the giant tortoises and have a number of eggs in incubation. If anyone is interested in having a very long term companion/pet they can be contacted on the following number 07810 160935. However, whilst tortoises are reasonably common pets in this country there are many regulations attached to buying and owning them. They are great characters but require specialised care and attention from the owner. There is lots of information available to people who are thinking of having a tortoise as a pet, There are notes on tortoise care on our web site www.blakevets.co.uk or you could contact The British Chelonia Group, The Tortoise Trust, or The British Association of Tortoise Keepers."

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Notes to Editors:

All tortoises are Chelonia but there are a number of different breeds Sulcata being just one.

We have a number of other photographs available for the article if you would like them

FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND WITH:-

The British Chelonia Group: www.britishcheloniagroup.org.uk

The Tortoise Trust: www.tortoisetrust.org

The British Association of Tortoise Keepers: www.batk.org.uk

For more information and photos:

Stuart Saunders,
Practice Manager
Blake Veterinary Group Ltd,
Tel: 01278 451592
Email: stuartsaunders@blakevets.co.uk