

British Columbia

Frank the Tank, the giant tortoise found in a B.C. spinach field, heads to his forever home

The juvenile sulcata tortoise was found last month by farmers in Richmond, B.C.

[Karin Larsen](#) · CBC News · Posted: Nov 28, 2023 5:00 AM PST



Frank the Tank, a sulcata tortoise that was found in a farmer's field, is pictured getting acquainted with his new owner Monday at the B.C. SPCA in Maple Ridge, B.C. (Ben Nelms/CBC)

Six weeks after he was discovered abandoned in a Richmond, B.C., spinach field, Frank the Tank has a new home at a mystery location somewhere in the province.

The juvenile male sulcata tortoise — which could grow to be the size of a wheelbarrow and weigh up to 90 kilograms — was adopted Monday from the SPCA in Maple Ridge, about 40 kilometres east of Vancouver.

Kahlee Demers, shelter manager of the Maple Ridge SPCA, said Frank's forever family was selected out of the hundreds who applied after his story made international headlines.

"Really, I was looking for a home that could secure him, keep him safe for a long time, and that has the background knowledge that you need, because this is not an introductory tortoise," said Demers.

Frank's new owner declined CBC's interview request, but did say they have prepared their home with both indoor and outdoor space that's fortified and protected. They're also committed to the long haul, knowing that sulcata tortoises can live as long as 150 years.

Frank the Tank, an exotic tortoise found abandoned last month, has been rehabilitated and adopted out by the Maple Ridge SPCA. Even better for Frank, he is moving to a rural location with lots of room to do what he does best — dig.

It's a wonderful ending to a story that could have gone the other way considering how fragile Frank was when he first came into the care of the Maple Ridge SPCA, suffering from shell rot and a bad respiratory infection.

Mark Vosper, B.C. SPCA animal protection services regional manager, stepped up to foster Frank during his rehabilitation.

"That first week we really weren't sure he was going to make it," said Vosper. "He just laid under the heat lamps ... secreting liquid. He'd been outside in the cold and wet and didn't want to eat."

Good veterinary care from a reptile expert and a course of antibiotics cured the respiratory issue and the shell rot is almost gone now too.

According to Vosper, Frank is back to his tortoise self, gobbling up hay, cabbage and peppers, and snuggling up to humans in hopes of getting a nice scratch on the shell above his neck.

"He's a real character. He likes his food, he likes his tickles and he follows you around. It's like having a big stone dog, really," said Vosper, referring to the sensation of petting Frank's shell.

Sulcata tortoises like Frank the Tank are known escape artists, with extraordinary digging capabilities.

Like all pets, there are some less cute moments.

"He does like to eat his own poop occasionally, if you're not quick enough," laughed Vosper. "But that's like a lot of animals."

It remains a mystery how Frank the Tank came to be wandering free in Richmond.

Sulcata tortoises are known escape artists, thanks to their ability to dig through almost anything, including drywall. But no one has come forward to claim him, making it likely he was abandoned.

Whatever the circumstances, the tale of the tortoise on the lam has captured the imagination of people around the world

"I've had people reaching out from even as far as New Zealand," said Demers. "It's been overwhelming, the amount of support and people coming forward who want to know more about Frank the Tank and where he ends up in his journey."

Sulcata tortoises are native to Africa, inhabiting the southern part of the Sahara Desert. They are considered endangered, largely because so many are taken from the wild for the pet trade. It is illegal to bring a sulcata tortoise or egg into Canada without an import permit.

Frank's happy ending notwithstanding, it's worth noting that a giant reptile from a far-away desert really doesn't belong in B.C.

"People shouldn't be breeding this kind of animal, ideally," said Vosper. "Frank was lucky the day that he was found. He could have just died there in the cold."