



Introduction Guide To The Care Of

Bearded Dragons

Scientific Name: Pogona Vitticeps

Life Span: Approximately 10 years in captivity

Size: 16-24 inches

Appearance: Bearded Dragons are a heavy-bodied, yet relatively small species of Amagid lizard, which upon maturity has a noticeable 'beard' in the form of spikey scales protruding from the throat that the dragon makes prominent when angry or excited. They are generally tan, beige or grey in colour, but captive breeding has created a substantial range of morphs available within the pet trade.

Temperament and Handling: Bearded Dragons are highly inquisitive and lively lizards, who are diurnal so active by day. They make an ideal first lizard as they are relatively easy to care for and they can become quite tame with regular interactions with their keeper. We recommend that males and mixed genders are not housed together as they may fight and cause injury to one another, but if you are going to keep more than one together we recommend females, which would still need to be monitored closely for any signs of dominance or aggression. Keeping bearded dragons in a group would also mean that you would need a larger vivarium and plenty of hides to ensure that all your bearded dragons have room to move around and have many places to feel safe. When bearded dragons feel threatened they will inflate their beards to warn off predators. This along with the head bobbing gesture, that is common during mating and territorial displays, make them an interesting species to observe.

Housing: Adult Bearded Dragons are quite lively and appreciate a large vivarium. A 3ft vivarium should be adequate for a adult bearded dragon, but the more space you can give them the better, especially when housing multiple bearded dragons together. Bearded Dragons do well in a dry savannah (woodland) or desert type set-up.

Heating and Lighting: There are a variety of different ways in which to provide sufficient heat and light within the vivarium, but it is important to note that regardless of the type of equipment setup you choose, Bearded Dragons require a basking spot with temperatures around 40°C (104°F), with surrounding temperatures around 28°C (82°F) and 12 hours of full spectrum UVA/UVB lighting. They are a diurnal species, so light is not required at night time, and temperatures can also be allowed to drop overnight to simulate the conditions they would be accustomed to in the wild. The right sort of lighting is critical for the health and well-being of your Bearded Dragon, as they require UV-B lighting to help their bodies absorb vitamin D3. When choosing appropriate equipment for your bearded dragon's enclosure, you must decide whether you are going to provide heat and UVB lighting in one unit or if you are going to run separate devices for creating the required heat and light. All



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equipment should be readily available from reptile specialist and online suppliers. Basking lights are appreciated by bearded dragons, who like to bask under a hot heat source during the daytime. A suitable heat emitting bulb can be attached to the roof of the vivarium using a porcelain heat-resistant socket and is quite safe as long as a guard is fitted to ensure your bearded dragon cannot come into contact with it. Some of these bulbs can provide both sufficient heat and light, so it is important to understand the capabilities of the bulb before using within the vivarium. Additional UVA/UVB lighting may not be required if the bulb you have chosen provides this full-spectrum light. The disadvantages of using these type of bulbs is that they have a relatively short shelf life, so need to be replaced regularly (approximately every 6 months to a year dependant on type of bulb). Using a bulb also means that to provide heat there must always be light. Bearded Dragons only require a 12 hour photoperiod per day, so it is beneficial to allow them some hours of darkness at night. This may mean that a secondary heat source may be required specifically to provide warmth during the night, particularly during the winter months or if your house is predominantly cold. Another option is to provide heat using a ceramic heat bulb that produces no light, but keeps the ambient air temperature high. This would require you to provide additional UVB lighting during the day to allow your bearded dragon to bask. Florescent lights are a good source of UVB lighting to use with a separate heat source like a ceramic, because they do not emit too much heat, so should not affect the temperature controls within the enclosure. All heat sources need to be controlled by a suitable thermostat and be protected by a guard. Heat bulbs usually work well on Dimmer stats, whilst Ceramic heaters require a Pulse Proportional stat. Some thermostats can be purchased that will automatically lower the temperature at night time, but these are usually a little more expensive to buy. On/off timers can also be purchased to control the hours of light, but this is a convenience device and not necessary for the safety of your Bearded dragon.

Natural sunlight can be beneficial to your bearded dragon, so 10-20 minutes outside on a summer's day may be appreciated. It is important to ensure that your bearded dragon cannot escape for become too cold in these instances though.

Humidity and Hydration: Bearded Dragons do not require high humidity, but a little more than normal room humidity should be maintained during the shedding process. Good ventilation is essential in a bearded dragon's vivarium to ensure that humidity levels do not become too high

Feeding: Bearded Dragons are omnivorous and should be fed 4-5 times a week with a varied diet of both appropriately sized gut-loaded insects and fresh, chopped vegetables and fruit. A recommended ratio of insects to fruit to make up the diet should be around 80% insects to 20% vegetables, fruit or flowers. Feeder insects including mealworms, crickets, small grass hoppers, earthworms, waxworms, spiders and roaches can be fed to your bearded dragon, but these should be dusted with a good D3 and calcium supplement regularly. This is especially important as they grow from juvenile to adult as growing bearded dragons require more calcium in their diet to aid healthy development. It is advised to give hatchling bearded dragons additional supplements with

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food on a daily basis, while adult bearded dragons may only need their food dusting every 3-5 days. Cuttlefish may also be given to boost your bearded dragon's calcium intake. Suitable chopped vegetables and fruit include dandelion leaves, cabbage, turnip greens, nasturtiums, squash, broccoli, apples, clover, green beans, carrots, melon, grapes, peaches and bananas (with skin). All should be washed before being given to your bearded dragon and obtained from a guaranteed pesticide/chemical free source. Alternatively, frozen and thawed mixed vegetables can also be used, but avoid iceberg lettuce as this has no nutritional value. Feeding too much high green cabbage is also not good for your bearded dragon as it can interfere with the absorption of calcium, but keeping the food offered as varied as possible will usually avoid this type of problem occurring. Remove any uneaten organic matter daily to avoid your bearded dragon eating rotten/mouldy food and to prevent bacteria building up within the vivarium. Many reptile stockists may also have a prepared diet available to buy that is balanced specifically for bearded dragons. These are usually purchased in the form of dried pellets or in sealed cans. They offer your bearded dragon a complete diet, so the addition of extra nutritional supplements should not be required, although many bearded dragons may not take commercial food without disguising it amongst chopped greens or by hand feeding. This is because some bearded dragons are more attracted to the movement of live food, so do not readily recognise the prepared pellets as food. Commercially prepared foods are a good food source to use regularly, but it is not recommended to feed your bearded dragon on them solely, but to use them only as part of a varied diet.

Please note that this is only an introductory guide based on our opinions and experience, we advise you to continually research and learn as much as possible from as many sources as you can, every animal is different and new care and information is always being developed and found 😊