

# BEARDED DRAGON - CARE SHEET

## *Pogona Vitticeps*

Bearded dragons originate from Australia; they are known to live in sub-tropical forests and also deserts. Bearded Dragons aren't either the smallest or the largest of the lizard family and are known to grow on average 16-24 inches from nose to tail.

Bearded dragons are among the tamest of all lizards, and their outgoing personalities, activity level, appetites and interesting social behaviours make them a very captivating lizard to observe. They have a very rapid growth rate, so the 4" hatchlings can grow to their adult size within a year.

Most bearded dragons adapt easily to handling and are calm enough to perch on their owner's shoulder, or be placed on a countertop, or enjoy the view from a windowsill.

### **Housing**

The minimum size cage for up to 2 adult dragons should be 48" x 24" x 24". Several basking sites should be provided under the hot spot and the UV lighting. Bearded Dragons need to bask and they need high temperatures to help with the digestive process. Basking area should be about 100 degrees Fahrenheit with an ambient temperature of 75F and then dropping to about 65F at nighttime.

Bearded Dragons need to have UV running along the top of the tank. In the wild they bask in the sun to absorb the vitamins from their food. Obviously in a tank they won't receive much sun so a UV will act as the sun. Bearded Dragons need to tell the difference between night and day, to do this you need to have your UV bulb on for 12 hours and off for 12 hours. The UV must be within 12" of the bearded Dragon to enable the dragon to get the full benefit of the UV bulb. Your UV bulb will need to be changed once a year as it loses its efficiency. You will need a ceramic heating bulb and a pulse thermostat to control the temperature of the tank. You will also need a thermometer inside the tank so that you can check they are being kept at the right temperature. Some people use 2 thermometers, one at the cooler end and one at the hotter end to monitor the temperature range. If you use only one thermometer then place it in the middle of the tank towards the bottom. A substrate is known as the material to line the bottom of the tank and these can range from newspaper, bark, and sand for reptiles. Never use hot rocks, as they are widely known to cause belly burns.

### **Feeding**

Bearded Dragons like fruit and vegetables as well as meat. They like a large variety of live insects, which include black and brown crickets, locusts, mealworms and wax worms. A good measure of the size of live insects to feed is that they must not be bigger than the size of the dragon's head. Do not feed mealworms to baby dragons as they contain chitin which is hard to digest. Do not feed them insects from your garden, as you do not know if they have been sprayed with anything that can be harmful to your dragon. Fresh fruit and vegetables must be offered daily and remember that they like variety.

They like to eat Chicory, Watercress, Broccoli, Courgettes, Carrot, Peas, Apple, Banana, Kiwi and grapes. Try to avoid spinach and kale as they are calcium binders and affect the dragon's bones. Another thing to avoid is iceberg lettuce, as this has no nutritional value to the dragon. Make sure to chop the food into small bite size pieces to avoid choking.

Bearded dragons grow very fast and this means that they require extra calcium for their bones to remain strong and to develop at the normal rates. Bearded Dragons also need extra Vitamin D3; this vitamin is needed just as much as calcium. This vitamin is needed for your Bearded Dragon's body to absorb the calcium.

All you need to do to maintain your Bearded Dragon is to dust your live food every other day with a vitamin and mineral supplement like Nutrobal. Water can be offered in a shallow dish but it is advisable to spray the cage once a day, as in the wild the dragons would drink the dew from the plants.

### **General Information**

Natural sunlight is very beneficial and should be provided if possible. Bearded dragons should never be placed outside in a glass enclosure. The animal could easily overheat and die.

Bearded Dragons live for an average of 4-10 years depending on their quality of lives, if they have had good lighting and temperatures maintained as well as a good balanced diet then you could expect your dragon to live longer than a dragon that hasn't. But if you have a female that has been repeatedly bred then her life span can be expected to be quite short.

Beardies will keep you amused for a long time. Just observing and interacting with them is fascinating. There are 2 things that the Beardie does; one is to nod its head (which is a sign of dominance) and the other is the arm waving (this is a sign of submissive behaviour). When they sit with open mouths this is their way of cooling down their body temperature

It is not advisable to keep two males together as they will probably fight; more so if a female is present. If you would like to keep more than one Beardie then make sure that there is only one male in the cage.

Do not mix other reptiles with Bearded Dragons, as it is an accident/fatality waiting to happen.