

Bearded Dragon

Care Guide

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Origin:

The Bearded Dragon (Pegona Vitticeps) is native to the Eastern and Central regions of Australia. They are commonly called the “Agama lizard”.

They are found in semi-arid desert areas, shrublands and dry forest areas. They are **diurnal**, which means they are most active during the day.

Bearded dragons are mostly terrestrial, land dwelling lizards but they will burrow and climb when given the opportunity too.

Lifespan:

They typically reach about 18-24” in length from the tip of their nose to the tip of their tail and can live up to 15 years.

Diet:

Bearded Dragons are **omnivores**, which means that they eat both meat/protein and vegetation.

Hatchling - Juvenile aged dragons will need a diet of 60% protein and 30% vegetation/greens. The last 10% of their diet will be supplements such as calcium and vitamins. At this age you will want to feed your dragon twice a day. When they become about 6-12 months old you can start feeding them once a day.

Adult dragons will only need 20-30% protein in their diet and the other 60-70% vegetation/greens and then supplements. As adults you will want to feed your dragons veggies / greens daily and protein weekly.

You should always **gut load** your feeder insects at least 24 hours prior to feeding your reptiles. This ensures that they are getting the proper and full nutrients from the insects / feeders. To gut load simply feed your feeders things such as veggies, greens, fruits.

Obesity is an increasing issue in bearded dragons so by only providing them with protein at this age once a week you can help maintain a healthy weight.

Always consult with a exotic/reptile veterinarian if you have any questions or concerns about feeding your dragon.

Safe Foods:

Insects / Feeders:

- Crickets
- Dubia Roaches
- Discoid Roaches
- Red Runner Roaches
- Hornworms
- Silkworms
- Superworms
- Snails
- Pinkies
- Waxworms
- Butterworms
- Repashy grub pie mix

Veggies/Greens

- Arugula
- Bokchoy
- Cactus pads
- Collard / Spring Greens
- ENdive
- Escarole
- Kale
- Mustard Greens
- Pea Shoots
- Turnip Greens

‘Mixers’ (do not feed every day)

- Asparagus
- Basil
- Beet Leaves
- Bell Pepper
- Carrotions
- Cilantro
- Carrot Greens
- Cucumber Innards
- Raw Carrot
- Clover
- Dandelion
- Fennel
- Lemon Balm
- Lemongrass
- Mint Leaves
- Pansies
- Parsley
- Rosemary
- Spinach
- Raw Squash
- Sugar Snap Peas
- Swiss Chard
- Thyme
- Raw Yam
- Zucchini

Fruit (treats):

- Apple
- Banana
- Cactus Fruit
- Mango
- Berries
- Melon
- Grapes
- Figs

- Papaya
- Peaches

Housing:

Over the years of people keeping Bearded Dragons the requirements, like for most if not all reptiles, has been constantly changing. In the past, a 40 gallon breeder tank was considered sufficient enough for adult bearded dragons. However we have learned over the years that this just is not true. We recommend using a **4'x2'x2'** enclosure for your lizard as this allows them more room to move, climb and display natural behaviors.

For a juvenile dragon a 40 gallon would be great, but as they reach adult size (around 1-2 years) they will NEED a bigger enclosure.

BIGGER IS ALWAYS BETTER!

Do not co-habitat your dragon. They can be very territorial and end up fighting, injuring or even killing tank mates.

You always want to mimic your animals natural habitat as much as you possibly can. A great substrate mix for bearded dragons is a topsoil, sand and excavator clay mix. This allows for the arid desert-like floor and allows your dragon to dig and burrow. A good “recipe” we have found for this is 20% topsoil, 40% play sand and 40% clay.

Never use calcium sand or anything similar. This can be toxic for your dragon. Any substrate or sand that has calcium mixed into it can cause calcium overdose in your reptile, as it is absorbed into their feet and can be ingested.

You will want to provide your dragon with lots of climbing, lounging and hiding spaces in their enclosure. Some great things you can use to achieve this are hides, cork bark, logs, vines and plants.

Always keep in mind the more realistic to their natural environment the better!

You should always provide your reptiles with clean and fresh drinking water. Even desert species! You will want to provide your dragon with fresh and clean drinking water 24/7 and this should be provided in a big enough dish that they can soak in if they chose to.

A common misconception about bearded dragons is that they need to be soaked regularly. This is false and actually causes them to defecate and urinate involuntarily, which can lead to health issues.

You should only soak your bearded dragon to aid the stuck shed and if it is recommended by a veterinarian.

Good Enclosure Examples:





Bad Enclosure Example:



Husbandry:

Bearded dragons love the sun. It is super important to provide your dragon with uvb/uva and heat.

You will want to have a basking spot that stays between 105-110 degrees fahrenheit

. A gradient temperature of 72-99 degrees throughout the enclosure and a cooler side that stays around 77-85 degrees fahrenheit.

At night you will want your enclosure to cool down to about 55-70 degrees as this mimics how their natural temperatures rise and drop during the day and night.

To achieve this you will want to have your dragon on a 12hr day and night light cycle. The easiest way to do this is to follow the natural light cycle where you live. Use a timer to control when your lights / heat turn on and off.

Your bearded dragon still needs humidity in their enclosure. You will want to keep the enclosure between 30-60% humidity. Again this mimics how their natural habitats would be (drier during the day, more humid at night).

Behavior:

Bearded dragons are generally very docile and curious lizards. They love lounging around in their enclosures, and in the wild you would find them basking in the sun.

Typically in captivity bearded dragons are known for their docile and “easy going” personalities.

It is always important to know your animal's body language and understand what it is asking you.

When a bearded dragon's beard goes black and is puffed out it generally means something is wrong. Husbandry could be off, they could be irritated, or something with their health is off. Males bearded will go black during mating season as well to attract females.

If their tail is pointed upwards they are on alert. When their head is bobbing up and down they are showing dominance.

If your dragon goes flat against the ground they are scared. If their mouths are gapping and they are panting your husbandry needs to be fixed or they could have respiratory issues going on.

Handling:

When handling your dragon it should always be on their terms unless absolutely necessary.

The best way to pick up your dragon is to slide your hand under their whole body and support their entire body and legs.

You never want to grab your dragon from above, in the wild this is how predators would attack.

Never lay your dragon on their back. They do not have a diaphragm. This causes their lungs to collapse into themselves when turned upside down. They will suffocate if they are on their back for too long.

Bearded dragons have claws that need to be trimmed / filed down just like a dog or cat.

Sicknesses:

If your dragon stops eating or pooping, bring it to the vet. Reptiles can hide their sickness for up to 6 months to a year. If you think there is something wrong with your dragon it is always better to be safe than sorry and to bring them to the vet. Here are some common illnesses.

-Respiratory Infections:

Symptoms:

- gaping mouth
- coughing
- sneezing

- clicking sounds
- discharge from their mouth or nose
- slow or rapid breathing often

Causes:

- dirty enclosure
- incorrect temperature
- incorrect humidity
- overall incorrect husbandry

-Necrosis of the tail: Usually caused by retained shed or injury/bite.

This is when the tail becomes purple or black and falls off due to little to no circulation. Make sure you're offering an environment with proper humidity and they are properly shedding all of their skin.

Abdominal Bloating: This can happen over night/out of nowhere and can be a serious issue. It could be fluid retention, constipation, impaction, internal bleeding, or internal tumor. If it's a female it could be eggs.

Mouth Rot:

Symptoms:

- decreased intake of food and water
- uninterested in food
- thickened saliva
- yellow plaque
- yellow pus in or around their mouth
- swollen gums/oral tissue

Causes:

- poor nutrition
- mouth trauma
- incorrect temperature
- incorrect humidity
- compromised immune system
- stress
- unsanitary conditions

Parasites/Worms:

Symptoms:

- no interest in food
- weight loss
- vomiting/regurgitation
- abnormal looking poop
- diarrhea

Causes:

- unsanitary conditions
- eating feces
- very rarely the insects they eat can come with them (there is no way of knowing if the insects you buy may have parasites)

Eye infection/Eye bubbles:

Causes:

- improper nutrition
- unsanitary conditions
- foreign body in eye
- vitamin A deficiency
- mites

Symptoms:

- discharge in/on eye
- squinting or closing eyes
- swollen eyes
- redness

UTI/Cloaca Infection:

Causes:

- kidney stones
- unsanitary conditions
- impaction(foreign body)

Symptoms:

- redness on vent
- swelling on vent

-discharge on vent

Impaction:

Causes:

- eating substrate
- improper temperature/humidity
- overall improper husbandry

Symptoms:

- constipated/not pooping
- bloated
- regurgitation
- uninterested in food
- trouble walking
- not using back legs
- bump in their abdomen
- leg trembles

Supplies You Will Need For Your Dragon:

- 40-120 gallon enclosure
 - 40 gallon for hatchling - juvenile
 - 120 gallon for adults (4'x2'x2')
- Substrate
- Heat bulbs and fixture
- UVB/UVA bulbs and fixture
- Thermostat
- Thermometer and hydrometer
- Water dish
- Water conditioner
- Hides
- Plants, logs, cork bark, vines (decor)
- Feeders
- Veggies and greens
- Tongs

- Supplements