



Care Guide

Pogona vitticeps

Bearded Dragon



Why Do Bearded Dragons Make Great Pets?

Central or Inland bearded dragons are one of the most popular pet lizards in the world! It's easy to see why, as these rugged mid-sized lizards come in a variety of patterns, colors, and personalities. They are one of the few lizard species that will happily sit in your hands or on your shoulder, and while not overly large they are not small either, making them popular with children.

Lifespan

With proper care, bearded dragons have an average lifespan of 6-10+ years.

Size

Hatchlings measure 3-4", but not for long! Bearded dragons grow incredibly fast and are fully grown by 18 months, averaging 18-24" in length. With a few exceptions, males are typically larger than females.



Natural History

Inland bearded dragons are endemic to central Australia. Their natural habitat consists of hot, dry deserts, woodlands, and scrubland. These diurnal lizards are quite at home in this harsh environment and are adapted to a desert lifestyle, spending their days basking in the sun and their nights sleeping underground or under rocks.

Housing

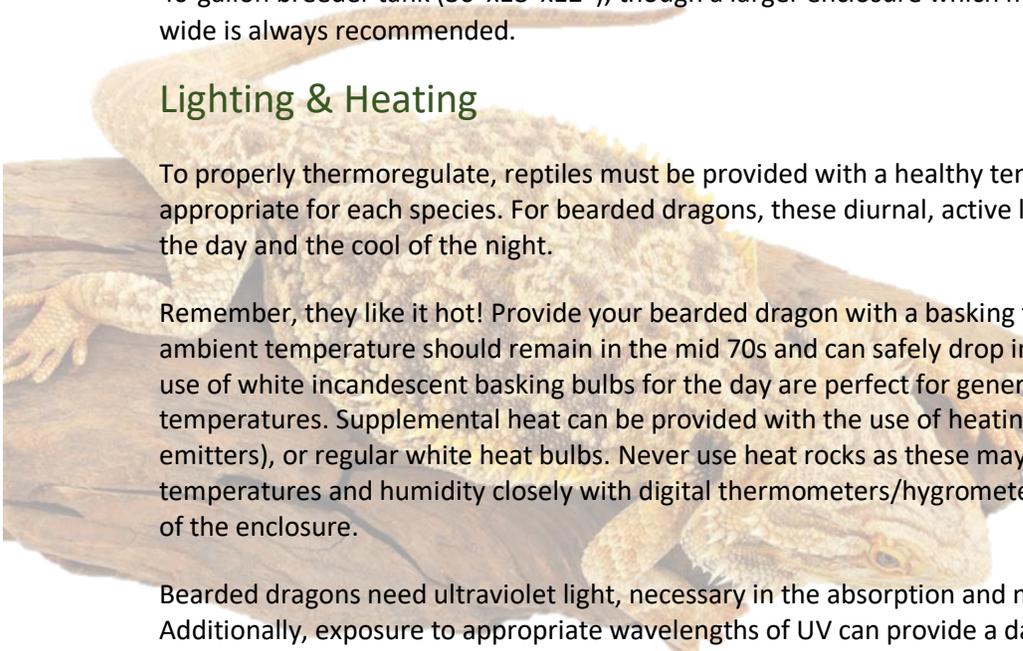
Hatchlings can be housed in a standard 10 to 20-gallon tank but be warned, bearded dragons grow fast and will quickly outgrow their enclosure. A single adult can be housed in a mid-sized enclosure, such as a 40-gallon breeder tank (36"x18"x12"), though a larger enclosure which measures a minimum of 18" wide is always recommended.

Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For bearded dragons, these diurnal, active lizards enjoy the intense heat of the day and the cool of the night.

Remember, they like it hot! Provide your bearded dragon with a basking temperature of 95-100F. The ambient temperature should remain in the mid 70s and can safely drop into the mid 60s at night. The use of white incandescent basking bulbs for the day are perfect for generating appropriate basking temperatures. Supplemental heat can be provided with the use of heating pads, CHEs (ceramic heat emitters), or regular white heat bulbs. Never use heat rocks as these may burn your lizard! Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends of the enclosure.

Bearded dragons need ultraviolet light, necessary in the absorption and metabolism of calcium and D3. Additionally, exposure to appropriate wavelengths of UV can provide a day/night cycle for your lizard



and display your pet in its best colors. Providing a high output UVB is a necessity and not just a recommendation.

Substrates & Cage Décor

For younger dragons, non-loose particle substrates such as paper towels, newspaper or reptile carpet liners work well to reduce impaction risks. For adults, dry, dust free substrates such as fine clay/sand or reptile carpet and tile may be used*.

Bearded dragons are very active lizards, especially during the day! They enjoy climbing and exploring their environment with their tongues. Cork bark flats, cork rounds, flat pieces of driftwood, rocks, and commercially available reptile décor work well. Artificial plants as well as live ones may be used as well.

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bioactive
setups!**



Offer your dragon a water bowl, one that is shallow enough to allow your lizard to drink from and escape easily, but deep enough for the occasional soak.

Diet & Nutrition

Bearded dragons are primarily insectivores when they are younger, but omnivores as a whole. This means that your dragon should be offered gutloaded, dusted insects regularly, especially when they are young, and primarily fed prepared salads when they are older. Insects include gut loaded crickets, dubia roaches, mealworms, and black soldier larvae. Superworms, waxworms, and hornworms may be offered as a treat. Never feed pinky mice to your bearded dragon.

As a rule, young dragons should be offered insects which are no larger than the space between their eyes daily, as much as they will consume within 10 minutes. This could mean that you are purchasing insects often, or housing them at home. It is not uncommon to keep insects alongside keeping bearded dragons in the home, especially while they are growing for the first year of their life.

Adult dragons may also be offered insects, but not as frequently – several times a week should suffice.

Young and adult dragons may also be offered salads, which consists of dark leafy greens such as collard, turnip, mustard, or dandelion greens, and fruits and vegetables, such as squash, carrots, papaya, and strawberries, to name a few. These salads can be chopped and placed in a bowl in your dragon's enclosure.



All food should be dusted with a high quality calcium/D3 supplement at every feeding for babies, and every other feeding for adults. A high quality multivitamin is also recommended – follow manufacturers directions.

Handling & Temperament

As a standard, do not handle your lizard until it has settled into its new home. This may take a week or more. Once your lizard is settled, begin handling by placing fingers beneath their body and lifting and supporting the remainder of their body with your other hand. It is recommended that you start this process in the tank and then move handling to your lap or the floor as young dragons can be jumpy. Allow your lizard to walk hand-over-hand for 10-15 minutes per day until your lizard has grown accustomed to your touch. Although it doesn't take very long for dragons to grow accustomed to human touch, with time and patience bearded dragons become relaxed, engaging, and rewarding pets!