

# Bearded Dragon Care Sheet



## Biological Facts

- Inland Bearded Dragon: *Pogona vitticeps*
- Native to rocky, semi-desert regions bordering forests in Australia
- Captive life span: 8-15 years
- Size: up to 18-24 inches nose to tail
- Weight: 10-18 oz
- Color: light tan to dark brown but can darken considerably when threatened
- Sexual maturity: 1-2 years of age
  - Identifying features: Adult males have a broader head, thicker tail, darker black beard during breeding season, and more prominent femoral pores (glandular openings along underside of the thighs) than females
- Egg laying: approximately 4-5 weeks after breeding
- Incubation: approximately 60-80 days when incubated at 82°F (27.7°C)
- Clutch size: 18-24 eggs; up to 100% hatchability is common

## Behavior

- Social animals in captivity; usually adapt well to human caretakers
- Diurnal (active during the day) but in the wild, spend hottest part of the day in cool burrows

## Diet

- Omnivorous: eat vegetables, fruits, flowers, insects, and small vertebrates
- 60-65% plant foods and 30-45% prey items
  - Mustard greens, collard greens, turnip greens, kale, dandelion greens, zucchini, sweet potato, broccoli, peas, and grated carrots (Introduce greens and other vegetables from a young age to encourage acceptance in the diet.)
  - Crickets, superworms, waxworms, mealworms, pinky mice, and hissing cockroaches (Prey should be fed a healthy diet for 1 to 2 days prior to feeding to pets.)
- Phosphorus-free calcium supplement dusted over greens daily for juveniles (less than 2 years of age) and once or twice weekly for adults
- Fresh water daily

## Environment

- Well-ventilated, screen-topped tank that closes securely: 10-gallon tank for animals less than 1 year and up to 48x24x24 in (122x61x61 cm) enclosure for adults
  - Maintain a temperature gradient from 75-85°F (23.8-29.4°C) in the coolest area and up to 90-100°F (32.2-37.7°C) in a basking area. Use infrared lamps and ceramic heat emitters rather than hot rocks.

- Provide ultraviolet (UV) light in the UVB spectrum. Lack of UVB radiation can cause vitamin D deficiency, inhibit calcium absorption, and result in metabolic bone disease.
- UVB bulbs come in two forms: fluorescent and mercury vapor. Prices for these lights range from \$30 to \$75. Replace fluorescent bulbs every 6 to 9 months as UVB bulbs lose UV output over time even though they continue to produce visible light. Mercury vapor UVB bulbs continue to produce UVB radiation and need to be replaced only when they stop producing light.
- Place UVB lights within 12-18 in (30.5-45.7 cm) of the dragon's basking area. The bulb should not be blocked by glass or plastic, which will filter out beneficial rays.
- Reptile carpet, newspaper, or paper towels as bedding (Avoid shavings, sand, corncob, and fiber pellets, which can irritate the respiratory tract and cause intestinal blockage if ingested.)
- Branches or rocks for climbing and basking, and a hollow log or other "hide box"
- Fresh water in a large pan for soaking (Change the water daily and when soiled.)
- Separate housing for hatchlings; hatchlings may nip at each other, and some adults will eat young

### **Preventative Care**

- Complete physical examination every 6 to 12 months
  - Consult a veterinarian with experience treating reptiles if you have any questions or concerns about your bearded dragon's health.
- Annual fecal examination for parasites
- Blood tests as recommended by your veterinarian

### **Common Medical Disorders**

- Anorexia
- Egg binding in females
- Intestinal parasites
- Metabolic bone disease
- Traumatic wounds
- Skin and jaw infections