

Bearded Dragon Care



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INTRODUCTION

If you are planning on getting a Bearded Dragon as a pet, or you already have one but want to brush up on your lizard care skills, this manual will guide you in ensuring they live a long healthy and happy life. By far the most popular Bearded Dragons are the Eastern Bearded Dragon and the Central Bearded Dragon as they both make wonderful pets for the whole family to enjoy! Whilst Bearded Dragons are fantastic for both first time owners and seasoned professionals, there are several factors you should consider when looking after your new friend to ensure they will stay happy and healthy.

Both Eastern and Central Bearded Dragons can grow from 30-60 cm in length, meaning your pint-sized critter will become a larger than life housemate in no time! Both species can live for 10-15 years and are relatively low maintenance.

HOUSING

Melamine Enclosures or Glass Terrariums are the most practical form of housing for Bearded Dragons as they are simple to clean and make it easy for you to view your new friend exploring his home. For the first 6-9 months of a Bearded Dragon's life, a 2 foot (60cm) enclosure is adequate, however later on you will need to upgrade to at least a 4 foot (120cm) enclosure to ensure your Bearded Dragon has enough space to keep growing. If you have two Bearded Dragons, we recommend moving up to a 6 foot (180cm) enclosure as this allows enough space for both Bearded Dragons to grow whilst also providing plenty of space for them to have an area to themselves when they need it.

TIP – As your Bearded Dragon gets older, we recommend that the enclosure should have a width of 18 inches (45cm) so they have ample move to turn and move around freely.

ULTRA VIOLET LIGHTING

Bearded Dragons kept indoors require Ultraviolet light (UVB) and a source of calcium usually in the form of a powder. This UVB Light stimulates the production of Vitamin D3 in the Bearded Dragon's system so that they can absorb the calcium provided in their food. This ensures your lizard's bones remain hard and healthy. Most commonly UVB lights come in a T8 Fluorescent Tube and normally have a lifespan of 12 months. Remember to buy a brand new UVB tube every year. These UVB tubes are available in 3 strengths. 2.0, 5.0 and 10.0. If you are keeping a juvenile Bearded Dragon, a 10.0 minimum must be used. Aquarium florescent tubes, older UV tubes and 2.0 tubes DO NOT have any beneficial UV for your Bearded Dragon.

TIP - Ultraviolet light does not travel through glass. The UV light must reach the Bearded Dragon uninterrupted and be within 45cm.

HEATING

Did you know that Bearded Dragons are ectothermic? This means they rely on external sources to control their body temperature, such as sunlight or a heated surface. As a result, your Bearded Dragon will require some form of heating such as a Ceramic Heat Emitter or an Infra-Red Lamp, Heat Mat or Heat Cord to keep them warm. It's recommended to have overhead heat as well as additional under belly heat so that your Lizard can choose wherever he feels most comfortable. Offer a 'Gradient' of temperature meaning that there needs to be an area in his enclosure where the lizard can get away from the heat and cool down when he wants to.

BREEDING

Bearded Dragons can become aggressive when it comes to the breeding season. This is usually seen after a “winter cooling” period where the lizard goes into a state of brumation. As the weather warms (or you increase the temperature in the enclosure) be careful that the male Bearded Dragon doesn't get too aggressive with the female. Bearded Dragons can lay over 20 eggs and have multiple clutches usually four months after the initial mating period.

SEXING

Sexing Bearded Dragons is a difficult task. Often based on guess work, the body structure, head shape and tail length are usual giveaways where females will be shorter and daintier compared to males. However, there are only a few definitive methods, one being a “candling” method where an LED light is shone under the cloaca of the dragon, if it's a male there should be two hemipenes visible, if female there shouldn't be. Another common way is the male will have some raised bumps inside his back legs whereas the female's bumps are less pronounced. You can sometimes sex Bearded Dragons by introducing a confirmed male or female with your Bearded Dragon and review behaviour. This method however is fairly risky if done incorrectly....so continually watch them for any signs of aggressiveness.

TIP – Try finding some helpful tutorials online in regard to sexing to assist in getting a clearer picture.

TANK MATES

Bearded Dragons are best kept with other Bearded Dragons or on their own as they are naturally solitary however, if enough space is provided then it can be done successfully.

When choosing other lizards to house with your Bearded Dragon, keep in mind that juveniles raised with other lizards are less likely to be aggressive but we always recommend supervising as every lizard is different and they all have different temperaments.

Snakes and large, extremely aggressive monitor lizards are not suitable tank mates as they will harass and harm your lizard.

TIP - if choosing to keep Bearded Dragons and other reptiles together upgrade your enclosure to a larger model to combat the added space required to prevent aggression from occurring.

TANK MAINTENANCE

It is essential to do a complete clean out and disinfectant of your Bearded Dragon's enclosure at least once every 2 months which ensures that any sheds, food scraps and waste is cleaned up. Spot cleaning is also very important and should be done at least every 2 days. Food Bowls should be cleaned out a day after feeding and water should be changed daily. Bearded Dragons are fine with tap water to drink and no extra water treatments are needed.

DIET

Bearded Dragons are omnivores and feed on a variety of foods. Their staple food can be a nutritionally balanced pellet and a mixture of feeder insects, fruits and vegetables. At Reptile Life, our Bearded Dragons are fed Commercial Pellet Food, live insects, fruits and vegetables to ensure they get all the required nutrients. Extra food items can be fed including two fruits mixes, bananas, wood roaches and a large variety of veggies. If feeding mealworms make sure you cut them into smaller pieces as a whole mealworm is difficult for your Bearded dragon to digest. We do not recommend feeding mealworms to Juvenile Bearded Dragons unless cut into extremely small pieces.

TIP – Many people over the years have fed their Bearded Dragons Dog and Cat Food and sometimes mincemeat. Bearded Dragons find this hard to digest so we recommend feeding once every few weeks at the most.

Juvenile Bearded Dragons should be fed as much as they can consume in about 15 minutes every day, whilst adults should be offered food less frequently. Waiting between feeds allows lizards to digest their food properly as their metabolisms are slow which means food takes longer to pass through their digestive systems. If you have more than one lizard, we recommend feeding them separately so one of your Lizards doesn't miss out on food. The most important dietary requirement is **Calcium Powder**. This Calcium in conjunction with UV light will keep your Lizard's bones strong.

TOXIC TO YOUR LIZARD

Be careful what you feed your lizards. Certain food products can be poisonous, so if you are unsure it's best not to offer it at all! Some examples include chocolate, avocado, caffeine, onion, rhubarb and eggplant.

Likewise, we recommend only feeding fresh food to your lizards and removing any left-over food items that your Bearded Dragon hasn't eaten.

Suitable fruits and veggies include but are not limited to carrots, corn, peas, spinach leaves and bananas.

HEALTH CARE

Observe carefully what your Bearded Dragon is eating so you will be aware if he loses his appetite. This could be a sign illness or insufficient Heating, UV Lighting or Calcium. Establish a pattern of what a healthy lizard looks like so that you can more easily pick up when your Bearded Dragon's actions are different. However, most problems originate from poor or incorrect tank maintenance and hygiene.

Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD)– Caused by no UVB light and a lack of Calcium.

Dysecdysis (Shredded Shedding) – Based on humidity being too low resulting in incomplete sheds and stuck scales. We have shedding products in-store.

Loss of weight - Normally nutritional deficiencies cause by the wrong food lacking the correct nutrition.

IN SUMMARY

Bearded Dragons have been extremely popular as pets in Australia and overseas for many years and the popularity is growing quickly. They make a fantastic pet especially for kids as they teach them responsible pet ownership. Given the correct conditions your new pet Bearded Dragon will thrive in captivity giving your kids hours of fun and enjoyment.