

# Bearded Dragon



## *Pogona vitticeps*

One of the most common reptile pets, the bearded dragon has as much personality as it has variability in color and skin texture. Friendly and attentive, the "beardie" has an average life span of 7-10 years and an average adult size of 18 inches (but they can get up to 24 inches!)

## Housing

### Size

Enclosure size should be adjusted for the size of your dragon. A hatchling (0-2 months) or a juvenile (2-7 months) can usually be housed comfortably in a 20"x10" enclosure while lone adults (over 18 months) will require housing at least 36"x18". Housing multiple dragons together can be tricky as they may exhibit aggression towards one another which can result in damage to, or loss of, tails and toes (or worse). It is recommended not to house multiple bearded dragons together except for short periods of time and exclusively for mating purposes. If you plan to house multiple beardies together long term, an enclosure at least 48"x18" is advisable, but larger is better.

### Substrate

There are a variety of acceptable substrates for your beardie. Hatchlings to juveniles should be housed on substrate that cannot be swallowed, such as cage carpet or a sand mat. Larger dragons should be housed on cage carpet or a sand mat as well, but some owners may prefer to use sand. If a sand substrate is used, particular attention should be paid to the size of the granules, as they can potentially cause an impaction if they are too large and get swallowed.

### Lighting

UVB bulbs are a must for all bearded dragons. UVB is necessary for your dragon to synthesize vitamin D3, which is in turn necessary for calcium utilization. UVB exposure should be provided 10-14 hours a day. Without adequate UVB exposure a beardie can develop metabolic bone disease (MBD) as well as a decrease in quality of life and lifespan. MBD is a diseased cause by a calcium deficiency and symptoms can include a kinked tail or spine.



## Some products to look for

- Zoo Med Cage Carpet
- Exo Terra Digital Thermo-hygrometer
- Zoo Med ReptiSun 10.0 UVB Bulb
- Rep-Cal Calcium with Vitamin D3
- Exo Terra Glow Light Clamp Lamp Fixture
- Zoo Med Repti Basking Spot Lamp
- Nature Zone Bearded Dragon Bites
- Zilla Basking Platform
- Exo Terra Reptile Feeding Dish



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## Temperature

Bearded dragons like it HOT. The basking spot should be located on one side of the enclosure and exceed 100°F while the “cool side” of the enclosure should range from 70°F to 80°F. This can be achieved by selecting the appropriate wattage basking bulb and placing it off to one side of the enclosure creating a temperature gradient across the enclosure. It is also a good idea to give your beardie a way to climb closer to the heat source so it can thermoregulate by getting as close to or as far from the heat as it wants. Heat pads and heat rocks are not recommended for bearded dragons.

## Humidity

Bearded dragons have a very low humidity requirement. While it may go unused, a shallow water dish large enough for your beardie to fit its body into is recommended. The water dish alone may keep your humidity at the appropriate level (30%-60%) but if it is not you can use a small spray bottle and spritz the tank with some water once or twice a week.

## Diet

### Vegetables & Fruit

Bearded dragons can be offered plant matter as often as seven days a week. Younger dragons (under 1 year old) should be offered plant matter less often than insects whereas plant matter should make up the bulk of the diet of an older dragon (over 1 year old). Dark leafy greens should make up the majority of what is offered with fruit only being offered occasionally. Good choices for greens include collard greens, mustard greens, and dandelion greens. Iceberg lettuce should not be fed to bearded dragons as it has no nutritional value. Examples of appropriate fruit to offer include bananas, strawberries, and raspberries. Citrus fruit should not be offered.

### Insects

Bearded dragons enjoy a variety of insects. There are a myriad of choices available that include crickets, superworms, and dubia roaches. All of the choices have their own advantages and disadvantages and the merits of each should be researched before selecting a feeder choice. Regardless of the type of feeder chosen (your beardie will appreciate variety), supplementing with vitamins and calcium is a must. Some feeders may also require gut loading.

### Other food choices

Bearded dragons may take an appropriately sized rodent or lizard if offered. These food items are best offered as the occasional treat, not as a staple food in your beardie's diet.



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