

CREATURE CARE SHEET

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Bearded Dragons

Pogona vitticeps

Introduction

These gentle beasts naturally found in Australia but captive bred specimens are now readily available due to their willingness to breed and relative ease of keeping. Bearded Dragons make a wonderful pet for both beginners and advanced reptile keepers. Due to their docile nature and relative small size (usually 16-20 inches) they have become very popular in recent years. These beautiful creatures are highly recommended as a first reptile for families with small children due to their seeming love for attention.

Housing

Young Beardies under 25cm in length can be housed in a 90 litre vivarium- make sure it is longer than it is tall. This will last them for a few months only as they grow quickly. Adult Dragons should be housed in nothing smaller than a 180 litre tank. The larger the better really with the emphasis on length rather than height- within reason. Screen lids should be used for the top of any aquarium style cages you use. Do not use glass, acrylic or wood to cover your cages. This will not allow enough air circulation and will also trap humidity in the cage. Screen tops allow air flow, allow your lighting and heat sources to work correctly and also allow humidity to escape.

Lighting

Bearded Dragons require full spectrum UV lighting for 12-14 hours a day. These fluorescent bulbs should stretch the length of the vivarium and your Beardie should be able to come within 15-20cm of the light. The UV light should be placed over the cage and not directed through the glass, glass will deflect the UV rays. Follow the directions on the package of the bulb for replacement frequency.

Heating and temps

To produce heat and a basking spot in your enclosure you can use either a ceramic heat emitter or a reptile basking light (red, blue or white) The best fixture for any of these choices is a porcelain dome light fixture. This type of fixture is a must with a ceramic heat emitter due to the amount of heat they produce. The temperature for this basking spot you created should be around 40C for juveniles and can be around 35C for adults. The cool side of the enclosure should be around 30C during the day. Once again within a few degrees of this temp is just fine.

Night time temperatures can fall as low as 19C. It is fairly easy to keep your night temps above this even in the winter. If you can't keep your temps above this you may want to consider buying an under tank heater (UTH) for night time use. Using this just during the evening hours will help create a warm spot for your Dragon to sleep. DO NOT use heat rocks as these can cause serious burns on your animal's underside.

A thermometer on the "hot side" and one on the "cool side" will make sure that your temps are in the range they should be in.

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Substrate

For baby to juvenile Bearded Dragons you can use newspaper, paper towels, reptile carpet amongst other things. Larger specimens are fine with Calci-sand or reptile carpet.

Feeding and diet

Bearded Dragons are omnivorous, meaning that they eat both animal and plant matter. Any and all food items that your Bearded Dragons eat should be no bigger than the space between their eyes. If the food items are bigger than the space between their eyes it can cause impaction and/or hind leg paralysis. Baby and juvenile Beardies should be offered appropriately sized crickets two-three times a day. Offer as many as your Beardie will eat in a 5-10 minute period.

Young Bearded Dragons can eat anywhere from 20-60 small crickets a day. Your Beardie should also be given fresh greens daily. Spraying the greens with water will help them last longer and will also help keep your Beardie hydrated.

Sub-adult to adult Beardies only need to eat prey items once a day along with fresh greens. Once they are this age you can also offer them Locusts, Cockroaches, Mealworms, Waxworms, Silkworms, Butterworms, Red worms, Earthworms and just about any other worm available. All these should be used as treats though with crickets and greens being the stable part of your Dragons diet. DO NOT feed your Beardie insects that you have caught in your garden. These bugs could have parasites that could be passed on to your Beardie or they could have been exposed to poisons that could kill your Beardie.

Prey items should be dusted once a day with a calcium/vitamin D3 supplement. All prey items should be dusted once a week with a multivitamin supplement. Any uneaten prey items should be removed from your Dragons enclosure.

There is a wide variety of greens that are available that are good for your Beardie. Dandelion greens, Collard greens, Mustard greens, Bok choy, Kale, Turnip greens, Escarole and Chicory are among the easiest to find and the best to use. Most types of lettuce are composed mostly of water and hold little or no nutritional value. With the wide variety of other greens out there it is better and easier to just avoid any type of lettuce. Spinach should also be avoided as calcium binds to it and will not be digested by your animal.

A wide variety of vegetables can also be offered to your Beardie. Butternut squash, Yellow squash, Spaghetti squash, Acorn squash, all other varieties of squash, Green beans, Parsnips, Sweet potato, peas and Carrots. Carrots should only be used as a treat though due to the high amounts of vitamin A. Feeding your Beardie a lot of foods such as Carrots will end up in a condition called Vitamin A toxicity which is deadly. Squashes will either have to be cooked or microwaved before feeding them to your Beardie. This will soften them up and they can then be minced and eaten easier. Fruits can also be used, just avoid any citrus fruit such as oranges and grape fruit.