

Bearded Dragon Care Sheet

Lifespan: 9-11 years

Length: Adult males up to 2 feet in length (including tail)

Origin: Australia

Terrarium size: 230 Litres (minimum for adults)

Diet: Omnivores – pellets, meat, crickets, earthworms, leafy greens and vegetables

Temperature: 25-31°C. Basking area 35-37°C. Night time temp - 21°C

Substrate: Carpet, Kritter's crumble, desert sand (reptile quality)

Tank accessories: Hidey cave, provide rocks and branches for climbing and basking

Lighting: Fluorescent full spectrum lighting with UVB

Sexing: Males have larger heads, darker beards, and enlarged femoral pores

Compatibility: Typically social; bearded dragons of similar size can be housed together, but should be monitored; appear to enjoy interaction with humans

What you need to house your Bearded Dragon:

- Terrarium (bigger the better) – minimum size (230L)
- Substrate- (Carpet, Kritter's crumble, desert sand (reptile quality)
- Hidey cave – we need an area to hide and rest
- Basking log – to fan our bellies out to get warm
- Basking lamp and infrared basking globe (to keep warm)
- UVB light unit and globe – for vitamin D absorption
- Calcium and vitamin supplement powders – to be added to food
- Food – dried baby pellets, live food (crickets, mealworms, woodies), fresh vegetables
- Terrarium cleaner – gentle cleaning spray (cannot use household products as it can harm your reptile)
- Parasite guard- (internal & external)– for the treatment of intestinal parasites & external mites
- Thermostat – required to control optimal temperatures for your reptile
- Thermometer – temperature reader
- A lock – to secure your reptile and to keep him safe
- Food and water bowl – not too deep so that they cannot drown
- Keep your enclosure in a safe, calm area to limit the amount of stress to your reptile (no loud music, tapping on glass, bright lights etc)

Diet – (Omnivores)

Feeding your bearded dragon the **right** food will increase your beardies life span, increase the deepness of their colour and increase their mood.

Beardies are Omnivores (eat both insects and vegetables)- though this will depend on their age.

Young Bearded Dragons – should eat 80% insects and 20% vegetables & pellets

Adult Bearded Dragons – should eat 20% insects and 80% vegetables & pellets

This transition between food types should happen over a period of time while your bearded dragon is a adolescent/ sub-adult

Feeding a baby bearded dragon:

Young beardies grow quickly, because of this they will require much more insects than fruit and vegetables due to the high calcium and protein content. As beardies can be a little fussy at first when introducing fruit and vegetables, it is important to expose them to these early on. Cutting up small amounts and placing it in their enclosure with their insects can encourage them to try them.

How many crickets should I feed them?

You should try and feed them as many crickets as they can eat within 10-15 minutes twice a day (morning and night).

Feeding an adult bearded dragon:

Adult beardies will eat much less insects than younger dragons. An adult's main diet should consist of vegetables, lizard pellets daily, insects (crickets, woodies, mealies) should be offered every second to third day. Be careful not to overfeed your lizard as they can easily become overweight or unhealthy.

Suitable fruits, vegetables and plants:

- Squash, collard greens (leafy greens) mustard greens, turnip greens
- Bell peppers (raw), bok choy, butternut squash, cabbage (raw), celery, cucumber (peeled), carrots
- Blackberries, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapes, melons, peaches, pears, pinapples, plum, prunes, raisins, strawberries, kiwi, papayas (fruit should be offered occasionally)
- Basil, carnations, chives, clover, dandelion greens, daylilies, maple leaves, mint leaves, oregano, rose petals, rosemary (fresh), sage, thyme (fresh)
- Make sure that none of the food is wider than the gap between his/her eyes.
If an insect or vegetable is wider than the gap between your beardies eyes, then there is a high risk of him/her choking and/or getting injured.

Not suitable to feed:

- Iceberg lettuce (has no nutritional value)
- Spinach (difficult to digest)
- Spoiled food (mouldy, wilted, slimy etc)

Do not feed your dragon Avocados as they are toxic to your dragon and will be fatal

Suitable insects:

- Crickets, earthworms, silkworms, mealworms (occasionally), superworms (as treats), black soldier fly larvae and woodies

Feeding tips:

- Uneaten food should be removed at the end of each day
- Wash all of the fruits and vegetables before you give it to your dragon
- Do not feed your dragon spoiled food (anything you would not eat, do not give to your dragon)
- Vary the diet up – change the type of vegetables, insects to prevent them getting bored

- Feed the crickets 'gutload powder' a few hours before you offer them to your beardie- gut-load is packed full of nutrients and will provide your dragon with more nutrients. Crickets should also be fed carrot slices (prolongs the longevity of the live food)
- Fresh water should be supplied daily
- Keep the lizard pellets in a sealed airtight container
- Do not feed your beardies too many mealworms (occasionally offer) as too many mealworms can cause impaction. Do not sustain your lizard on mostly mealworms, which contain a high level of "chitin" which is difficult to digest in large quantities
- Do not feed your lizard bugs you find around the house or at a bait shop as these bugs may carry parasites as well as insecticides which can be deadly to bearded dragons.

Vitamins and minerals:

Vegetables contain **beta carotene** which a bearded dragon's body converts to vitamin A when he/she need it. If he/she does not need vitamin A then they will simply excrete the beta carotene. However, synthetic vitamin A (found in some reptile multivitamins) cannot be excreted properly and is instead immediately absorbed into their body. This means synthetic vitamin A will cause vitamin A poisoning if the bearded dragon has already had his/her requirements of vitamin A. The best way to make sure your bearded dragon is getting enough vitamin A without risking them getting sick is to use a reptile multivitamin which uses Beta Carotene instead of synthetic vitamin A. This way your beardie will simply excrete the Beta Carotene if their body doesn't need any vitamin A.

Your bearded dragon should receive enough natural vitamin A (found in fruits and vegetables) so using a supplement is generally only required occasionally.

Symptoms of hypervitaminosis A (an excess of vitamin A) include:

- Swollen eyes, throat and body as well as lack of energy

Calcium and Vitamin D3

Calcium and vitamin D3 are two of the most important vitamins and mineral you need to make sure your bearded dragon has. These nutrients help them to develop strong bones and are important for gravid female dragon (carrying eggs). Though, like us they cannot absorb calcium without vitamin D3.

What you need:

- Full spectrum UVB – 10 light – globe/tube – for calcium absorption (12-14 hrs a day) – turn off at night time to simulate natural daylight
 - Make sure you replace the UVB globe after 6 months (even if they are still working) as the globes expire after this time (run out of UVB)
- Florescent light baton (reflector) - to hold the tube and penetrate the lighting downwards
- Calcium powder (to occasionally sprinkle onto the live food)
- Once you are confident your dragon will not escape your hands, you can in-fact take them outside with you for natural sunlight (make sure you have a harness attached for safety) – do not leave him unattended.

Heating:

Bearded dragons come from a desert environment which means they like HOT temperatures. Your terrarium should have a hot side and a cold side. Your hot side will be where the basking light is and the cool side will be the side without the basking light. You should monitor both the temperature and humidity of your beardies tank to make sure it matches their habitat as closely as possible.

Temperature reading of the thermometer: Between (25-31°C)

Basking area: (35-37°C) – attach the thermostat to the basking light for optimal setting & control

Night time temp - 21°C – Set the thermostat to a lower temperature

Heat light:

A basking heat lamp is required to focus the heat into one specific part of the terrarium (over a log/cave). This is so that your dragon has a warm place to fan out his belly and get warm if needed. It is important that you use a correct basking light (so not use regular house light-bulbs) as they are not designed to stay on for 10-12 hours a day and will get very hot and may explode (hazardous). Your basking lamp should be connected to a thermostat to simulate wild conditions.

What you need to heat your terrarium:

- Basking lamp/reflector – to direct the heat globe
- Basking globe – (wattage will depend on distance, season, age and if thermostat is used)
- A heat mat, cord, rock may be added for extra heat if required

Monitoring the temperature and Humidity:

You will need a way to monitor the temperature and humidity of your bearded dragon's terrarium. You will need to keep the humidity as low as possible and the temperatures between (25-38°C).

What you need to monitor temperature and humidity:

- Thermostat – preferably dimming (less pressure on your bulbs and mimics their natural environment more so than an on off thermostat).
- Thermometer and humidity gauge – measures temperature and humidity in the terrarium

Substrates:

Your bearded dragon requires some type of flooring for the terrarium. There are many substrates available such as Kritter's crumble, red desert sand, carpet or pebbles. We tend to highly recommend using the carpets as some bearded dragons may accidentally ingest the substrate which can cause impaction. Impaction is a very serious issue and should be avoided at all costs. Carpets can be easily washed and reused again which is also beneficial cost wise.

Environment enrichments:

- **Reptile hammocks** – beardies love climbing and perching on various items to bathe in sunlight, so it's no surprise they absolutely love reptile hammocks. These hammocks use suction caps to easily attach to the inside of the terrarium, and can easily support even the chunkiest ones.
- **Tank backgrounds** – bearded dragons are not used to walls and expect to see scenery in all directions. Because of this, your bearded dragon will be much happier with visual/mental stimulation from viewing something more impressive rather than blank walls.
- **Branches/climbing objects** – (drift wood–no objects found outside as this may harm them) Beardies are great climbers and enjoy having a branch or two to climb onto and sunbathe. Not only will this make your beardie happier it also adds more decoration to the tank which makes it more visually stimulating for reptile owners
- **Hidey caves/ rocks- (rock, log, cave, flat ornament, branch, driftwood)**
A basking platform and or cave is recommended so that your beardie has a place to sunbathe beneath the basking light to get warm, the platform should absorb heat and stay warm to aid in warming your beardie.

Unusual Bearded Dragon Behaviour – signs of illnesses:

Bearded dragons will usually behave differently when they're not feeling well or if something's wrong.

- **Impaction:**
If your bearded dragon is eating regularly he/she should also have a regular bathroom schedule. If your beardie has eaten well, but has not used the bathroom for several days, it could be sign of an impaction issue. Most minor impaction issues can be helped by gently massaging your bearded dragon's stomach in a warm bath. However, more serious impactions will require medical care from a reputable reptile vet.
- **Diarrhoea:**
Diarrhoea can be caused by change of diet, stress, or bad food. It shouldn't cause concern if it happens every now in then, but if it's a regular occurrence it could be a sign that something's wrong such as parasites or worms (keep your dragon up to date with worming treatments to prevent this)
- **Dehydration**
Since the bearded dragon's environment is very dry and very hot, proper hydration is very important. You can tell if your bearded dragon is dehydrated by gently pinching their skin with your fingers and letting go. If the skin doesn't return to normal instantly, it's a sign that they are dehydrated. Other signs of dehydration include sunken eyes, wrinkled skin, lack of energy, and a lack of appetite. Make sure you regularly bathe your beardie and refresh their water daily to help hydrate them.
- **Droopy Eyes**
Droopy eyes is when your bearded dragon's eyes begin to droop (similar to a bloodhound's eyes). Droopy eyes can be caused by kidney issues in bearded dragons. If you suspect your bearded dragon has droopy eyes, it is recommended that you contact your local vet for treatment.
- **Paralysis**
Paralysis is a serious issue that is most commonly caused when your bearded dragon eats something too large to digest. Whenever a bearded dragon eats food larger than the space between its eyes it puts pressure on his/her spinal cord during digestion. If the pressure on their spinal cord lasts too long it can cause paralysis or even death. If you suspect your bearded dragon has eaten an item too large and has become paralyzed you should immediately contact your local vet, because the paralysis can be reversed if your bearded dragon receives quick medical care.

Bearded Dragon Diseases:

If bearded dragons don't receive proper diet, lighting, or temperature they can develop certain diseases. Below is a list of the most common disease in bearded dragons.

- **Bearded Dragon Respiratory Infection**
If your bearded dragon's habitat is too cold or too humid, they can develop a respiratory infection. Symptoms of a respiratory infection include gaping mouth, breathing difficulties, puffy body and/or throat, excess mucus around the mouth and nostrils.
- **Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD)**
MBD is the weakening of the bones in your bearded dragon and is caused by a lack of calcium, vitamin D3, and/or phosphorous. Symptoms of MBD include: bumps in the legs that you can see/feel, swollen lower jaw, jerky movements, twitches and spasms, as well as bumps in the vertical columns of the back and tail. Fortunately metabolic bone disease can be treated with proper diet, temperature, and UV light. You can also treat MBD with the right bearded dragon multi-vitamin.
- **Mouth Rot**
Mouth rot is a yellowish/white substance that will appear in and around your bearded dragon's mouth. Usually your bearded dragon will have a decreased appetite if he/she has mouth rot

since their mouth can be swollen and their teeth can be loose. It is recommended to take your bearded dragon to a local reptile vet if you suspect your beardie has mouth rot.

Brumation- (hibernation cycle for bearded dragons)

Bearded dragons will respond to the changes in temperatures and lighting. During brumation a bearded dragon will become less active and have a decreased appetite. It's not uncommon for bearded dragons to sleep for days at a time and skip countless meals. During the brumation cycle your bearded dragon may get up every once and a while to eat and move around, but for the most part they will rest.

How long does brumation last?

Brumation is completely different for each bearded dragon. Some bearded dragons will brumate for a week, others for a few months, and some will never brumate. Since each bearded dragon's brumation cycle is different, it causes many inexperienced owners to assume their bearded dragon is sick. One day their bearded dragon will eat well and then he/she will nap for 5 days straight without eating. If you're concerned your bearded dragon's not eating enough during brumation, you can weight them on a scale (in grams) and monitor their weigh throughout their brumation cycle. Healthy bearded dragon's weight will not fluctuate during brumation. It is recommended, however, to not wake your bearded dragon when he/she is in brumation. Doing so can cause a lack of rest which can extend their brumation cycle.

Bearded dragon shedding:

Bearded dragons shed their skin as they grow. The amount of shedding will depend on the age of your dragon. As younger bearded dragons are constantly growing they will shed more regularly than adult bearded dragons. The average baby dragon will shed every few months where as an adult may shed 2-3 times a year. When they begin to shed, their colour will dull and their eyes will seem more puffy than normal.

What to do whilst my Bearded Dragon is shedding:

- Most beardies will shed without any issue, but we recommend bathing them regularly to help them shed.
 - You can do this by adding a small amount of warm water in a shallow tub and gently running the water over their back (do not add soap, fill the water too high or leave them unattended at any time)
- Try to resist helping them shed by picking at loose skin – if you peel off their skin too early it can damage the new skin and may hurt them
- You may aid slightly by using a damp warm washcloth to gently exfoliate the already loose skin that is barely attached to their body

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us on (07) 3843 1197 or email us on info@companionpetz.com.au

