



General care

A healthy Bearded Dragon should be bright and alert. Its body and leg muscles should appear well-formed and strong. There should be no signs of diarrhoea. Nails may become overgrown and will need to be trimmed. Consult your pet shop or vet.

Diarrhoea: this can be caused by incorrect feeding or internal parasite infestation.

Mouth rot: cheesy deposits appear in the mouth.

Respiratory problems: signs include fluid or mucus from the nose.

Bone disorders: signs include twisted, twitching, swollen or paralysed hind limbs, and a soft or undershot jawbone. This is due to a lack of calcium and/or vitamin D₃. It can be reversed if caught in time and properly treated.

If you are at all worried about the health of your Bearded Dragon you should consult your vet or a specialist reptile vet as soon as possible.

Some reptiles carry a form of salmonella. Salmonella is most usually contracted by ingestion. Good hygiene and washing hands after handling or cleaning your Bearded Dragon should be sufficient to prevent any risk of infection.



Shopping List

Vivarium	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Substrate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Heat mat/spotlight	<input type="checkbox"/>	UVB tube/UVB heat lamp	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thermometers x 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Silver reflector for tubes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dome reflector	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thermostat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food and water bowl	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bearded Dragon care book	<input type="checkbox"/>
Live foods and chopped veg	<input type="checkbox"/>	Calcium supplement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vitamin supplement	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cage furnishings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pet safe disinfectant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deodoriser	<input type="checkbox"/>

This leaflet is produced by the Pet Care Trust, the national charity that promotes the benefits of pet ownership and education. For more information, go to www.petcare.org.uk, or phone 01234 273933.



Remember you must never release your pet into the wild.



CARING FOR YOUR BEARDED DRAGON

Bearded Dragons originate from Australia.

The name comes from the pouch under the neck which can be inflated if they feel threatened. Colours vary from browns and greys, to pastel green, gold, orange and red.

They are a rock dwelling species of lizard and love to climb and bask in the sun.

Adults can reach sizes up to 45 to 60cm.

Adult males can be territorial and should not normally be kept together. **The average life span is 7-10 years but not infrequently longer.**





Housing

A tall, escape proof vivarium with good ventilation is the most suitable housing for a bearded dragon. The minimum cage size for an adult should be 90x45x45 cm and preferably larger.

Temperature - All reptiles are cold blooded and need an external heat source to maintain their body temperature. Each species of lizard requires different degrees of heating, but all lizards benefit from a range of temperatures within the vivarium. One end of the vivarium should be heated. This creates a thermal gradient allowing the lizard to choose its preferred temperature. Thermometers can be placed at each end of the vivarium to monitor the temperature range. The overall vivarium temperature should be controlled by a thermostat.

Wire mesh guards should be fitted over all hot heat sources used in order to prevent thermal burns. Gentle heat can be provided by using heat mats and more intense heat by spotlights or UV heat lamps. Your pet shop will advise on heating products and their use suitable for your bearded dragon. Create a thermal gradient of 26-28°C at the cool end and up to 40°C at the hot end. Night temperature can be safely dropped to a minimum of 16-18° for adults.

Lighting - Bearded dragons are diurnal lizards and require *high intensity* UVB lighting to fully absorb and utilize the calcium in their diet. This light should be left on for 12-14 hours in the day. The bulbs will need replacing from time to time and your pet shop will advise you.

Humidity - Bearded dragons, being desert species, require low humidity and good ventilation.

Furnishings - The floor of the cage should be covered with a suitable substrate such as, Coconut bark chips, Aspen wood shavings, Calci-sand or artificial grass – if using products like Calci-sand it is recommended that a rich source of calcium is supplied so that the animals do not ingest too much of the substrate as a calcium source (resulting in possible gut impaction). Provide a spot light or UV heat lamp for basking and place climbing rocks or branches beneath it. Provide a shelter, perhaps with a piece of cork bark and additional bark or branches to create areas for climbing.

Cleaning - Remove droppings and uneaten food daily. Water and food bowls should be washed, dried and refilled daily. Vivariums should be completely cleaned out and disinfected with a pet-safe disinfectant regularly. Soiled substrate should be disposed of and replaced. Deodorisers can be used in the vivarium - your pet shop will advise.



Feeding and Water

Bearded dragons are omnivores and become more vegetarian as they get older. They will eat a varied diet of live insects (as large as the width of their heads), fruit and vegetables. Young bearded dragons should be fed insects up to 3 times a day with a quarter of their diet made up of fruit and vegetables. Adults should be fed 4-5 times a week with at least half their diet made up of fruit and vegetables. Once growth slows, appetite diminishes substantially.

Animal protein can be supplied as crickets, locusts, giant mealworms, and pinkie mice. Waxworms should be fed sparingly as they have a high fat content. When feeding crickets feed a few at a time, and if they are eaten readily feed a couple more. Loose uneaten crickets annoy and distress them.

Vegetables: kale, dandelion, watercress, carrots, courgettes, parsley, etc.
Fruit: apples, pears, berries both fresh and dried – limited quantities

Fruit and vegetables should be washed and dried before feeding and offered in bite size pieces.

All food should be dusted with a vitamin and calcium supplement for fast growing juveniles and once or twice a week for adults.

Bearded Dragons may not recognize still water as drinkable. They respond to refraction of light on moving water. Shallow food and water bowls should be provided.



Handling

Bearded dragons are usually very docile and rarely bite. The spines along their sides are soft unless the body is inflated in defence when frightened. Movements should be slow, gentle but confident. To pick up your bearded lizard place one hand above the shoulders and support the underside with the other hand.