



# **Basic Bearded Dragon Care**

## **Inland Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*)**

The inland bearded dragon is generally considered one of the all-time best lizards to keep as a pet. They are known for being alert, hardy and tame, and bearded dragon owners love watching their lizards, whether during a feeding frenzy while chasing crickets or simply interacting with each other.

### **Inland Bearded Dragon Size**

Hatchlings measure about 4 inches; large adults can be nearly 2 feet in length.

### **Bearded Dragon Lifespan**

Average captive lifespan is between six and 10 years.

### **Inland Bearded Dragon Caging Tips**

While a hatchling dragon could live in a 20-gallon aquarium for a short time, it will quickly need a larger enclosure. A 4'x2'x2' is appropriate for an adult dragon. Screening should be used for proper ventilation, whether as a top on an aquarium enclosure or in the construction of a custom enclosure. Bearded dragons like to climb, so some sturdy branches are welcome in their enclosures.

### **Inland Bearded Dragon Lighting and Temperature**

Bearded dragons like it hot.

Basking Temperature	92-95F
Daytime Temperature	80-88F
Nighttime Temperatures	70-75F

In addition to the basking spotlight, provide full-spectrum UVB (ultraviolet) lighting over the rest of the enclosure. This lighting is critically important for dragons that are kept indoors, as it assists them in synthesizing vitamin D3, which aids in dietary calcium absorption. UVB bulbs must be changed every 6 months at minimum. There are many types of lights available; we recommend Arcadia bulbs or Zoo Med ReptiSun that emits 290-320nm of UVB.

Heat rocks should not be used as they are potentially dangerous and could burn your Beardie. Keep two thermometers in the enclosure (in two different locations in the enclosure) to track the cage temperatures of the basking (hot) side and the ambient (cool) side. A hygrometer should be utilized to monitor and maintain humidity at 35-40%

### **Bearded Dragon Substrate**

Paper towel, newspaper or tile are the recommended substrate for bearded dragon enclosure. Loose substrate such as sand or dirt should be avoided due to the risk of impaction if ingested. Wood

shavings should also be avoided not only due to the risk of impaction but also due to the risk of respiratory infection and toxicity of some woods.

### **Bearded Dragon Food**

Bearded dragons are omnivorous, meaning they eat both animal and plant matter. They are not usually picky and eat with gusto. Insects, such as crickets and dubia roaches, should be dusted with a vitamin/mineral supplement and calcium. Dusting can be achieved by placing the insects in a plastic bag with some of the powder, and shaking the bag to lightly coat the insects prior to offering them to your lizards. All insects should be gut loaded prior to feeding. See “Gut Loading handout” for specific instructions.

- Fatty insects, such as mealworms and superworms, should only be fed sparingly.

	<b>Juvenile Beardie</b>	<b>Adult Beardie</b>
Vegetable matter	50% diet, feeding 1-2x day	80% diet, feeding every other day
Insect/Animal matter	50% diet, feeding 1-2x day	20% diet, feeding every other day
Vitamin/mineral supplement	Dust insects or salad 4-5x week	Dust insects or salad 2-3x week

Bearded dragons should also receive finely chopped veggies (such as romaine lettuce, zucchini, carrots, etc.), greens (collard, mustard, dandelion, etc.) and fruit (kiwi, banana, mango, etc. in small quantities). Use healthy, vitamin-rich items; sprinkle the appropriate amount of powdered supplements on these foods, too. Avoid iceberg lettuce because it is not nutritious. A small salad should be offered daily. You can also feed commercially available foods from the major reptile product manufacturers. These foods are formulated specifically for the bearded dragon and can be a great addition to the fresh foods that your bearded dragon eats every day.

### **Water for Your Bearded Dragon**

Even though they are a desert species, they still need ready access to water. Mist bearded dragons using a water spray bottle 2-3x week; they’ll lick water droplets off cage walls, rocks, etc., as well as themselves. Don’t overdo it; you don’t want their enclosure to get too wet and become humid. Offer water in a dish that is large enough for them to soak. Be sure to keep this dish and the water in it clean, as they often like to defecate in the dish.

### **Bearded Dragon Handling and Temperament**

Bearded dragons are generally quite docile and will tolerate handling better than other lizard species. This is especially true of adults that have spent their entire lives in captivity, and often enjoy time with owners out of the enclosures.

Remember though, they require warmer temperatures and UV light, so time spent outside their enclosure should be limited to no more than one hour per day.