



**BEARDED DRAGON**

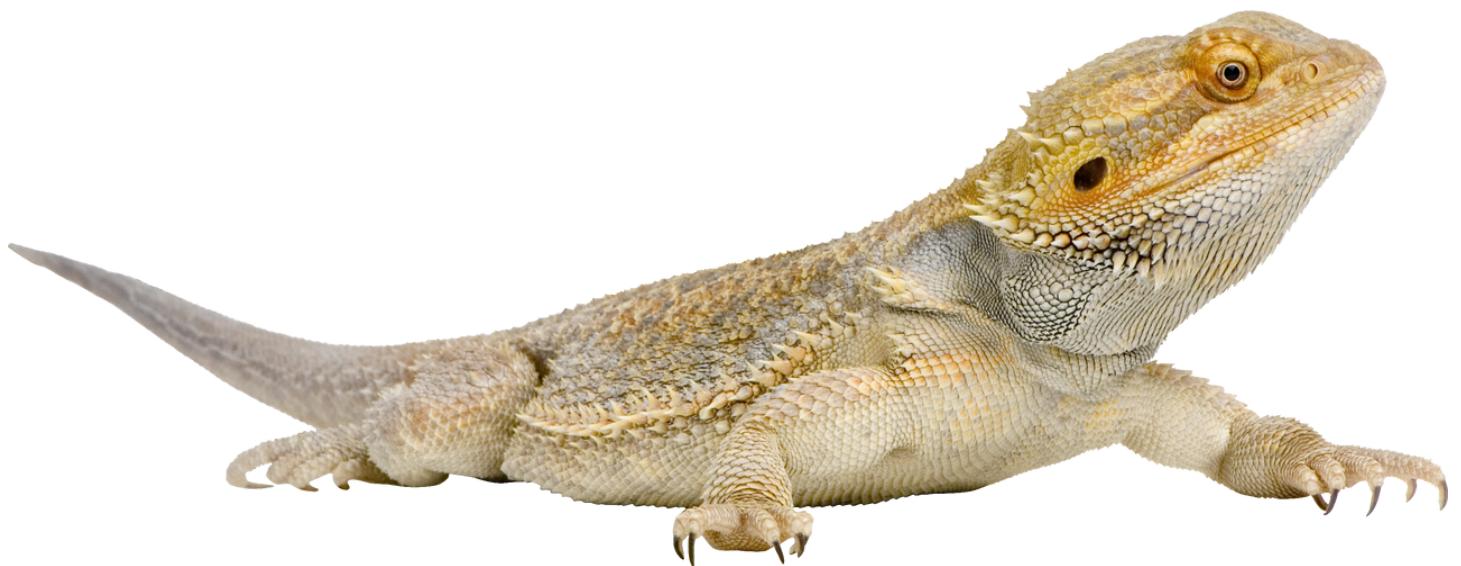
# **CARE GUIDE**

**THE NEW BEGINNING WAY**

# Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*)

## Difficulty: Intermediate

Bearded dragons are 18-24" long lizards with spiky greyish, beige, or orange scales (although other colours are available in captivity). They earned their name from their spiky, expandable throat pouch, which can look very much like a beard, especially when it darkens. These lizards are native to eastern and central Australia. They can be found in a variety of habitats, including desert, scrub, and dry forests. Although they are widely considered terrestrial lizards, bearded dragons are skilled climbers and enthusiastic burrowers in their native habitat. Bearded dragons are one of the most popular pet lizards in the world, with a calm, personable temperament. They live an average of 10-15 years in captivity with good care, although 20-25 years is very possible



# Housing

Per leading bearded dragon experts and international reptile welfare guidelines, a bearded dragon enclosure should be no smaller than 4X2X2, preferably larger. The enclosure should be front opening for easy access, and should have good ventilation to prevent overheating.



Can multiple bearded dragons be housed together? Bearded dragons are territorial rather than social, which means that keeping multiple bearded dragons in the same enclosure can lead to fighting and serious (sometimes even fatal) injuries. So it's best to keep only one bearded dragon per enclosure.

# Lighting & UVB

UVB lighting can be tricky, because in order to get the right strength of UVB (UV Index, or UVI), distance and potential mesh obstruction must be considered. To provide appropriate UVB in a 6x2x2 bearded dragon enclosure, you will need a 34" T5 HO Arcadia 12% or Zoo Med Reptisun 10.0 bulb, placed on the warm side of the enclosure.



The basking area should be placed as follows:

- UVB mounted over mesh: basking area 11-13" below UVB lamp
- UVB mounted inside enclosure: basking area 16-19" below UVB lamp

(These recommendations are approximations based on available data. For best results, use a Solarmeter 6.5 to determine the best placement to achieve a UVI of 4.0-6.0 in the basking area.) Full-Spectrum Lighting Bright light with a color temperature of ~6500K is suggested by

experts to be important to bearded dragons' mental health. Bearded dragons with additional "daylight" lighting in their enclosure seem to be more alert and active than those without, as well as demonstrating better appetite and more natural behaviors. Full-spectrum lighting is not the same as reptile UVB lighting, so you will need two separate lamps. The Arcadia Jungle Dawn LED Bar and Bio Dude Glow & Grow are both excellent lamps for this purpose. You will need enough lighting to illuminate 75-100% of the enclosure's length.

# Heating

Humans are warm-blooded, which means that our body temperature is automatically regulated. Bearded dragons, however, are cold-blooded, which means that they have to move between areas of different temperatures in order to regulate their body temperature. Bearded dragons warm up by basking under the sun in the wild. In captivity, they do best with a halogen heat lamp.

Basking surface temperature: 105-115°F (40-46°C) □

Cool zone temperature: 70-85°F (21-29°C)

Generally speaking, a cluster of two 90-100w Zoo Med ReptiTuff or Arcadia Halogen Heat Lamp bulbs should be plenty to achieve those basking temperatures in a 24" tall enclosure and adequately heat your



dragon's entire body. However, if you notice that they're getting too hot, dial it down with a plug-in lamp dimmer. If your basking area is too cool, you need higher wattage bulbs. To measure the basking surface temperature, use an infrared thermometer (a.k.a. temperature gun). To passively track basking temperature, use a digital probe thermometer, with the probe placed on the basking surface under the heat source. The Etekcity 774 is a good infrared thermometer, and most reptile-brand digital probe thermometers function well. If your cool zone temps are too low, you will need to add ambient heating equipment such as ceramic heaters, heat projectors, or a radiant heat panel to bump them back up to an acceptable range. All heating equipment should be turned off at night

## Humidity

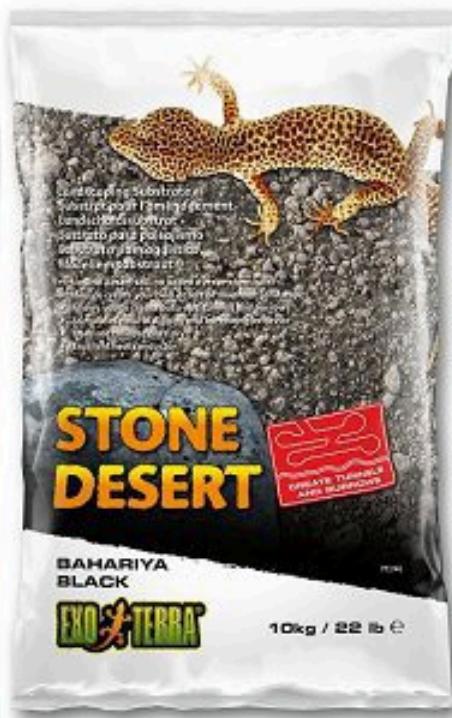
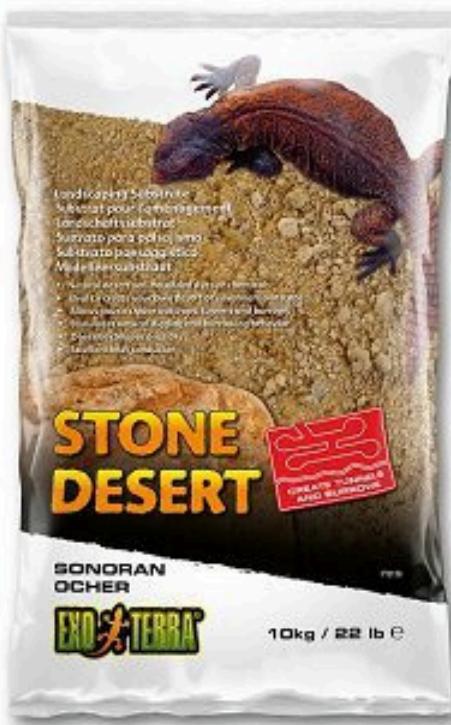
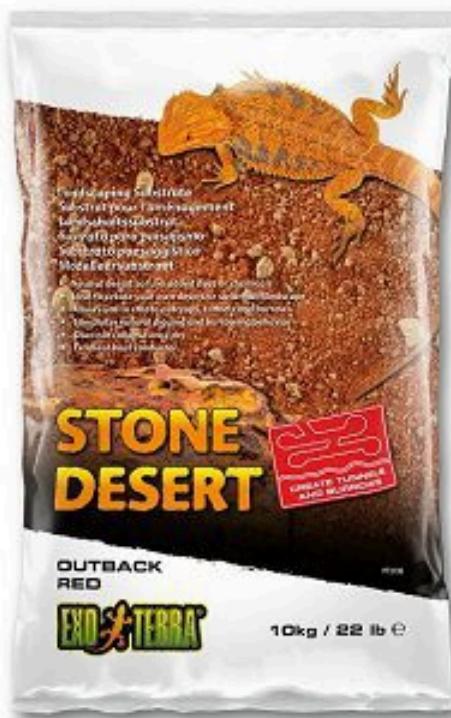
Bearded dragons should have an average ambient humidity of 30-60%, as measured by a digital probe hygrometer with the probe placed on the ground on the cool side of the enclosure. Humidity levels that are consistently higher than 60% or lower than 30% can make your bearded dragon sick. However, occasional spikes or dips outside of this range are perfectly safe. Lightly misting your bearded dragon's enclosure 1-2x/week with a spray bottle of water can be a good way to help them stay hydrated.

## Substrate

Bearded dragons are healthiest and happiest when they are housed on a substrate (a.k.a. "bedding") that imitates the conditions of their natural habitat. In eastern and central Australia, that habitat includes very sandy soil. So the substrate in your bearded dragon's enclosure should be fine sand or sandy soil, packed at least 4" deep – preferably deeper, if possible. Sick or wounded bearded dragons should not be kept on loose substrate. Instead, use paper towels until they have recovered. Feces and urates should be removed daily, and contaminated substrate should be scooped out and replaced. Substrate should be completely replaced once every 4-6 months, depending on how diligent you are about spot-cleaning.







**Décor** -Decorations play an important role in your bearded dragon's enclosure as environmental enrichment. Enrichment items encourage exercise, stimulate your dragon's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. And, of course, they make the enclosure look nice! Here are some ideas: cork logs, cork flats, sturdy branches, live or artificial plants, large resin terrarium ornaments, rocks, textured backgrounds Your enclosure is only as functional as the décor inside it, so make sure to be generous with the furnishings. The setup should not look sparse.

## Food-

Bearded dragons are omnivores, which means that they need both animal- and plant-based foods to get the nutrition that their bodies need. How often and how much they need to eat depends on age:

- Hatchlings (0-6 months old): Insects 2x/day, vegetables daily
- Juveniles (6-12 months old): Insects 1x/day, vegetables daily
- Adults (>12 months old): Insects 2-3x/week, vegetables daily

To put this in percentages, you're looking at roughly 60-80% protein for hatchlings, 50-60% for juveniles, and 20-30% for adults. It is perfectly fine to occasionally skip a feeding, and helps keep your beardie at a healthy weight.

The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for your pet bearded dragon is VARIETY. Provide as varied of a diet as you possibly can, and you will be rewarded with a healthier pet that always looks forward to mealtime.

**Feeder insects:** crickets, dubia roaches, discoid roaches, black soldier fly larvae, mealworms, darkling beetles, hornworms, silkworms, snails, grasshoppers

**Safe vegetables:** collard greens, cactus pads, spring mix, arugula, kale, pea shoots, alfalfa, bok choy, carrot greens, spinach, dandelion greens/flowers, hibiscus leaves/flowers

Fruit is high in sugar and should be generally avoided.

**Supplements-** To ensure that your bearded dragon is getting all of the vitamins and minerals that they need, you will need a calcium powder and a multivitamin powder – or a good all-in-

one. There are many options, but you can't go wrong with the Arcadia Earthpro supplement system or Repashy Calcium Plus LoD. For best results, use as directed by the label.

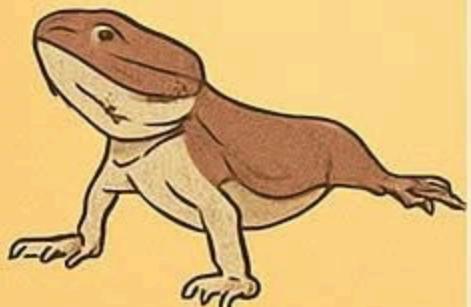
**Water** All living things on this planet need water, including the ones that live in the desert. Bearded dragons are no exception, and should have free access to a shallow bowl of fresh, clean water daily. Bathing or soaking your bearded dragon is an unnecessary practice, and is not beneficial to your dragon's health.

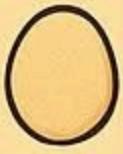
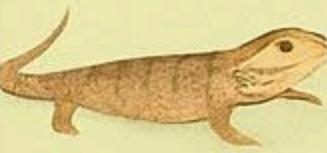
# How Big Should Your Bearded Dragon Be?

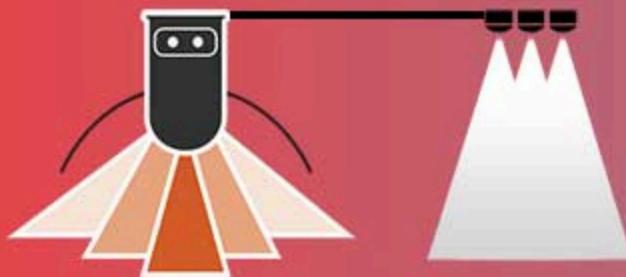
*Check this easy size-age guide*



## BEARDED DRAGON SIZE & AGE CHART (FROM HATCHLING TO SENIOR)



	<b>0-2 months</b>	<b>3-5 in</b>
	<b>2-6 months</b>	<b>5-11 in</b>
	<b>6-12 months</b>	<b>11-16 in</b>
	<b>4-7 years</b>	<b>16-20 in</b>
	<b>8+ years</b>	<b>16-24 in</b>



**HEAT**  
INFRA-RED

**UV**  
A & B

**LED**

FULL SPECTRUM



**BASKING ZONE**



**LIGHT & SHADE  
METHOD**



**COOL ZONE**

# Dragon's Age



## Baby

(0-4 months)



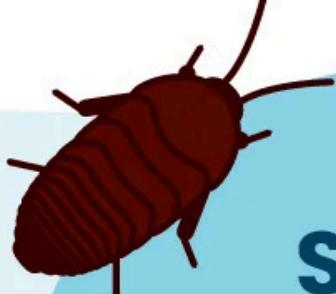
## Juvenile

(5-12 months)



## Adult

(12-18+ months)



### Staple Feeder Insects + Frequency

As many bugs  
as they can  
eat in a 10-15  
minute session

(some eat up to 30)

**3-5**

times a day

As many bugs  
as they can  
eat in a 10  
minute session

(20 - 30)

**3**

times a day

gradually  
reduce to once  
or twice a day

**1**

time a day

every other day, or  
a few times a week  
based on appetite



### Veggies + Frequency

Offer salad  
with staple  
greens

**1**

time a day

Offer salad  
with staple  
greens

**1**

time a day

Offer salad  
with staple  
greens

**1-2**

times a day

depending on how  
much they eat

# HOW TO HELP YOUR BEARDED DRAGON DURING SHEDDING TIME



WARM  
SHALLOW BATHS



PROVIDE PROPER  
HUMIDITY



OFFER  
SHELTER



DO NOT PULL  
OFF THE SKIN

# BEARDED DRAGON MOOD SIGNS!

CONTENT

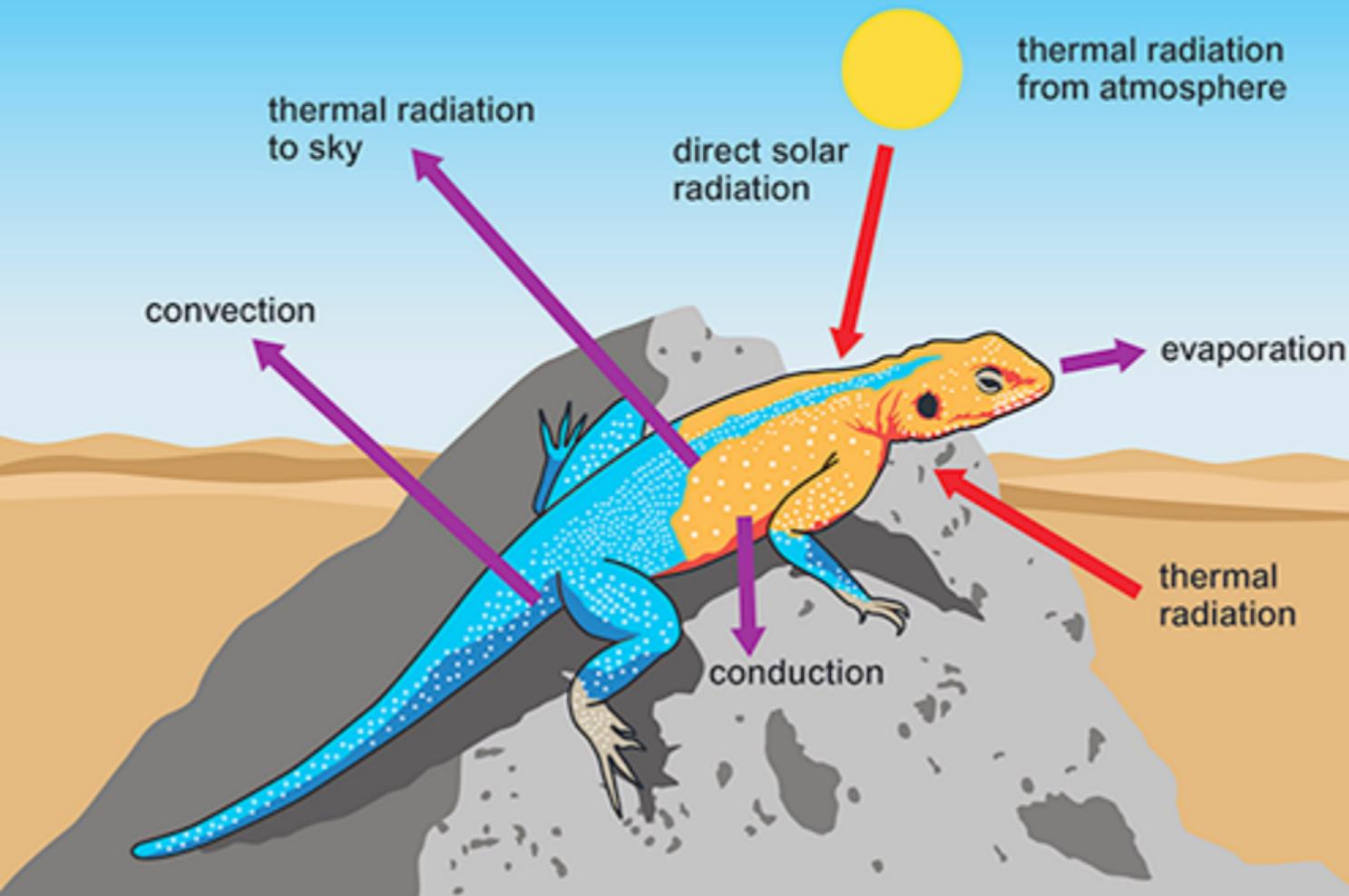
AGGRESSIVE



STRESSED

DOOMSDAY





# What to look for in a healthy Bearded dragon

- Willingness to eat and bask
- No excretions from eyes, nose and mouth
- Clean vent

Alert attitude



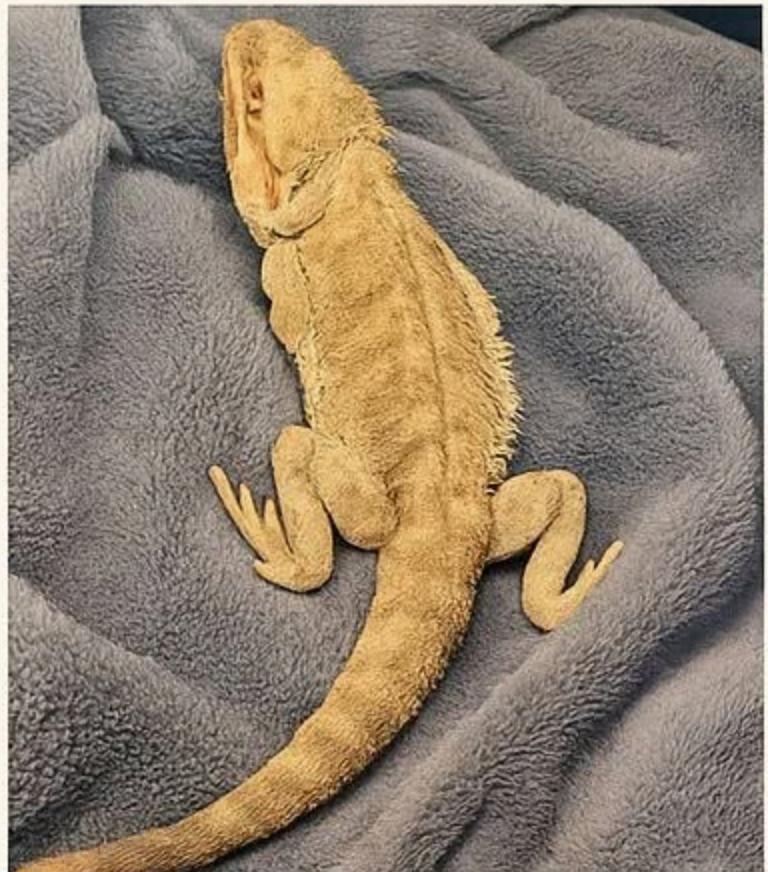
Filled out belly

Absence of swellings in toes or tail

# BEARDED DRAGON BODY CONDITION CHART



Emaciated



Underweight



Healthy



Overweight



Obese



Reminder: Always provide yearly health checks or more

# STAPLE

Dubia roaches

Locusts

Giant orange  
woodlice

Red runner roaches

Calci worms

Silk worms

Black crickets

Silent crickets

Banded crickets

Black soldier fly

isopods

# OCCASIONAL

Morio worms

Butter worms

Meal worms RARE

Wax worms RARE



**BUGS NO WIDER THAN THE SPACE  
BETWEEN A DRAGON'S EYES.**

**VARIETY IS ESSENTIAL**

**Dragons under 30g, 5-6 protein items once per day. (Salad daily)**

**Over 30g, 5-6 protein items every other day. (Salad daily)**

**Reduce to 4-5 protein items twice per week when a body length of  
14cm nose to vent is reached. (Salad 5 times per week)**

**Monitor body condition. Slight increases  
or reductions maybe applicable.**

**Feeding guidance**

**courtesy of Dr J Howard  
(BeardieVet)**

**ALL BUGS DUSTED  
WITH CALCIUM. USE A  
MULTIVITAMIN ONCE  
EVERY 2 WEEKS.**

**By Paul Symonds**

