

THE CARE OF BEARDED DRAGONS

The Bearded dragon, *Pogona vitticeps*, is a large agamid lizard. It is native to Central Australia. This lizard is a very gentle reptile with an even-tempered personality. They can be bred in captivity with relative ease and should live 8-10 years. Proper housing, diet and environment needs are essential in order to maintain these fascinating reptiles as pets. Bearded dragons are highly susceptible to intestinal parasites.

HOUSING: Bearded Dragons are large active lizards that require ample space to move around. Terrariums should be a least 72"L x 16"H x 16"W for a single adult and a 20-gallon tank for a juvenile. Safe floor substrate materials are ; artificial grass, bark or newspaper pellets. Sand designed for reptile cages may be used, but should be raked out daily and changed weekly**. The cage should be cleaned weekly with a disinfectant soap and washed out thoroughly. (****Reports of intestinal blockage due to sand injection are well documented**). Tree branches, cork bark or driftwood may be utilized to provide areas for climbing or basking in the cage.

Daytime temperatures should range from 80 - 90 degrees F with basking areas of up to 95 degrees. Nighttime temperatures should range from 60 - 70 degrees F. Recommended heat sources are: Under-tank heaters, Ceramic heat emitters, and daylight/nightlight heat bulbs.

Bearded Dragons, like most lizard species, have an absolute requirement for **ultraviolet (UV) light**. Without UV light, they cannot absorb calcium properly from their intestines; hence they can become severely deficient and develop a condition known as "Metabolic Bone Disease". Florescent bulbs (tubes) are recommended. All bulbs should be full spectrum and have a CRI rating of 90-98. The UV spectrum will wear out over time, so it is advisable to change the bulbs every 6 months.

DIET: *Juvenile Bearded Dragons*, beardies, are omnivorous and should be fed 4-5 week old crickets & mealworms. Chopped greens can be offered every other feeding.

Adults are primarily insectivorous. Plant matter should be offered every other feeding. Suggested items include: **Plant matter:** Dark green leafy vegetables (collard, turnip or mustard greens, kale, endive, bok choy or spinach) should make up the bulk of the plant matter offered. Others, such as green peas, green beans, squash and carrots, should be given only in small amounts. All vegetables should be washed, cut up in small pieces and blended together.

Animal matter: Insects such as crickets, mealworms, silkworms, and wax worms can be used as regular food sources. Insects should be allowed to feed on fresh vegetables for 24-48 hours before feeding them to your bearded dragon.

Calcium supplements should be "phosphorous -free" and should be used every other feeding. Fresh water should be provided daily. A large bowl for bathing is also recommended.

YEARLY HEALTH CHECKS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR ALL REPTILES!!