



Jungle Fever Care Sheet

BEARDED DRAGON

This care sheet has been developed by the proprietor through research and personal experience. It is intended to provide information on initial set

up and the care that your pet will require. For more in depth advice and information please do not hesitate to discuss your pet further with the staff of Jungle Fever or purchase a specific species book available at Jungle Fever.

COMMON NAME: Bearded Dragon: Inland Bearded Dragon

NATIVE: Australia

ADULT SIZE: 6 - 24 inches depending on species. The male Bearded Dragon is normally larger than the female

LIFE SPAN: 5 - 12 Years in captivity

HOUSING: Before you even think about collecting you newly acquired pet you must organise a place for it to live. A fairly large vivarium is needed; as the Bearded Dragon can grow very quickly. So the enclosure that seemed adequate when it was a hatchling will certainly not be big enough for an adult. Beardies can also climb very well, so a certain amount of height is required.

SIZE: For a single dragon you would need a cage around 3ft long x 2ft wide x 2ft high. If you felt that your new pet fancied some company you simply add the floor space by an extra foot for every other dragon you added, however, although they are communal they can feel overcrowded and can lead on to stress of the animal. If you are going to add another dragon it must be of similar size and age as cannibalism can occur, especially if there are multiple males in the same vivarium as females.

UV LIGHTING: Bearded dragons require daily access to ultra-violet light, this is extremely important as the UVB gives the lizards extra help in taking in vitamin b, which is also essential in the metabolism of calcium. Your bulb will need replacing every 6 months, the light may still appear bright but the strength of the radiation always weakens. The situation of the tube is also an important factor, your dragon must not be situated more than 10-12 inches away from it, at further distances the UVB gets weaker and the needed spectrum does not get obtained so the closer the dragon is the more UVB its getting.

HEAT: A temperature gradient inside the tank is vital due to the fact that all reptiles are unable to maintain their body temperature. An ambient temperature of around 90F should be provided with a minimum of 80F at the cooler side of the tank and a minimum of 100F under the basking area, also, a night time drop of around 70F. The most popular and effective methods of heating an enclosure include basking spot bulbs, under floor heating mats and ceramic bulbs, all of which can be attached to a thermostat for accurate temperature readings and a controlled gradient. If you choose either the ceramic bulbs or the spot bulbs you may need to cover them with a wire mesh cage, this is mainly to avoid burning your bearded dragon

THERMOMETERS: A thermometer is crucial to ensuring correct temperatures are maintained at the basking site within the enclosure. An additional thermometer needs to be placed at the opposite side of the enclosure to determine the temperature at the cooler end.

CAGE FURNISHINGS: There is a wide variety of substrates that can be used for dragons some better than others.

For baby dragons many breeders use kitchen roll or newspaper as impaction is a common problem in youngsters, you may wish to move them onto another substrate after at 6 weeks of age.

The most popular used substrates include bark chippings and sand, however there are disadvantages. Bark chippings and sand both have impaction possibilities but this occurs less in the older Bearded dragon. The larger chippings that cannot be swallowed are suitable substrates. Keeping in mind that dragons are from semi-desert regions, rocks and dimbing branches make the best furnishings. When adding large sticks, rocks or logs it is important to make sure that they cannot become loose or have a possibility to fall over, an easy way of ensuring that they stay in place is to use some clear silicone gel. Naturalistic decor can also be added, such as, a wooden or rock hide, moulded food and water bowls. Always make sure the furnishings are secure and won't topple over to hurt or kill your animal. Large rocks need to be secured so the lizard cannot burrow underneath and accidentally crush itself to death.

AVOID: Green vegetables are part of the Bearded dragons diet so plastic plants are not a good option as the Bearded dragon will try to eat them.

SANITARY MEASURES: Sanitary measures are important for your pets' health and well being. Faecal matter will need to be cleared on a daily basis and clean substrate added as required. Clean the tank weekly with an appropriate cage cleaner made for reptiles. Clean furnishings weekly by soaking in hot water and rinsing thoroughly before placing back into the enclosure.

Sanitary measures are also important for your health. Always wash your hands with a good antibacterial soap after you have finished cleaning and always wash hands between enclosures of other animals.

FOOD: All bearded dragons are omnivores, meaning they need a good supply of vegetation and meat.

All live food must be gut loaded before they are fed to your dragon; gut loading is the process of feeding up the live food before you feed them to you lizard. It is recommended that you use cabbage, kale, and potato to gut load the insects, but there is also a range of special cricket food on the market which is full of nutrients to increase the nutritional content prior to feeding.

It is vital to feed a well balanced diet of vegetation and live food to your Bearded brogan to maintain the balance of calcium to phosphorus. Insects are high in phosphorus and without the needed supply of vegetables to keep the balance; there is a possibility that the animals convert ingested calcium into an internal substance. Vegetables and fruits should be given on a daily basis and should play a large part of the diet. Foods such as watercress, dandelions and their leaves, figs, clover, mustard greens, turnip greens, red pepper, peas, and parsley. Some foods can be given but only as an occasional food e.g.

cucumber, apple, carrots, grapes, papaya and other exotic fruit but not citrus fruits. Ensure that vegetables are grated or cut up into bite size pieces.

Hatchling Bearded dragons should be fed very small crickets and very small/hatchling locusts, other wise paralysis in the back legs can occur if the food item is too large, a good way of judging is to give your dragons crickets half the size of their heads. Hatchling and small Bearded dragons should remain on cricket and vegetable diet until they are four months old. Mealworms should be excluded from the hatchling diet due to the hard exoskeleton skin. Hatchling Bearded Dragons should be fed regularly at least twice a day. Regular feeding is crucial if you have more than one hatchling Bearded dragon as they will tend to pick on each other, which can account for missing limbs, digits and tails.

Juveniles - Once the Bearded Dragon has reached four months old, the size of the live food does not have to be so strict. Small mealworms and larger crickets can be offered can be offered, however no bigger than the size of the Bearded Dragons head.

Adults - Adult Bearded Dragons enjoy large crickets, locusts, medium and large mealworms, wax worms and pinkies (pre killed mice). The pinkies are defrosted prior to feeding. They are high in fat so should be given as an occasional treat.

Another food source on the market at the moment is a range of dry pellet formulas, these are good in supplying a large quantity of needed vitamins

but many dragons will refuse them and prefer the fresh vegetables and live food. You may wish to try mixing dry pellets with a little hot water to soften the pellet and add a little blended soft fruit to the mix. The Bearded dragon they may find this more palatable and accept the mix readily.

AVOID: Kale, and cabbage type vegetables interfere with the production of thyroid hormones, so feed very sparingly. Spinach and Swiss chard prevent calcium absorption therefore again, fed very sparingly. There is also a group of vegetation that is not recommended for your dragon as they lack nutritional value and in some case the high oxalates can damage the dragon and may give it such problems as diarrhea. Such items are ice burg and avocado lettuce, spinach, rhubarb and citrus fruits like lemons and oranges. Care must be taken when giving wild insects or vegetation as any chemicals that may have been spread over the land can be potentially lethal to your Bearded Dragon.

EXTRA TREATS: For adult Bearded Dragons only - include wax worms, silkworms, earthworms and the occasional pinkie (these should only be given to adult dragons.) These should not be given too frequently as Bearded Dragons can become obese.

WATER: Bearded dragons do not drink that often from a water bowl. They can be encouraged to drink by gently spraying water over their face, they will respond quickly and start to lap up what is being offered. The bearded dragon seem to enjoy being bathed and it also helps with problems such as irritable pieces of shed skin left on the body, or even to help constipation. A shallow tray of tepid water will be ideal for a short time this however it is important to ensure that it does not get too cold.

SUPPLEMENTS: Vitamin and calcium supplements are readily available on the market and are usually in a form of powder that you dust onto the food items.

Hatchling Bearded dragons - dusting the food once a day as the youngster's need to gain extra strength and develop strong bones.
Juveniles - dust the food every other day prior to feeding.

Adult Bearded dragons however need the extra supplements not so often, only 2 times a week is needed.

NB. Although the dragons do benefit from extra multi-vitamin and calcium supplements, it is possible to give them too much of it. An overdose of vitamin A and b3 can be dangerous for the dragon.

HEALTH: Bearded dragons are usually very hardy animals not prone to illnesses. Many illnesses can be prevented by having good standards of cleanliness and care, a nutritious varied diet, appropriate spectrum lighting and heat and appropriately sized housing. By observing your pet daily you can spot obvious signs of ill health such as loss of appetite, sudden weight loss, discharges, labored breathing, abnormal stools. Any

concerns, it is always recommended that you consult your reptile vet to seek professional advice.