



## **Common Name: Bearded dragon**

Scientific Name: *Pogona vitticeps*.

### **Requirements**

You require a basic wildlife licence issued by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

### **Lifespan**

Around 10 -15 years. As the young bearded dragon grows, it will shed constantly. Once reaching maturity, the bearded dragon will shed every six to eight weeks. Shedding skin is lost in flakes rather than one long sleeve, as with snakes. In their natural environment, bearded dragons will enter a state of 'torpor' or hibernation during the colder months. Pet dragons will also slow down over these colder months, but possibly not to the same extent, depending on provision of heating lamps and food. Body fat is the primary source of energy at this time and the lizard may still go off its food. It is important to provide a secluded place for the lizard to rest.

### **Housing**

Adults should be kept in terrariums 120cm long. Cage decorations should include branches and logs for climbing and suitable hiding places. Cage temperatures should be kept at 30 degrees at the hot end and the cool end around 27°C. A 10.0 reptile UV globe should be provided and should be on for about 8 hours each day this helps with the absorption of calcium and the formation of bone structure Without UV they will die of Metabolic Bone Disease. Clean your cage regularly. Remove any faeces and wash out the water bowl daily. Substrate should be changed every few days or as needed. Washable floor coverings should be soaked weekly in a water/bleach solution, then thoroughly rinsed and dried. For convenience, buy two pieces of floor covering and rotate them.

### **Substrate**

Bark, commercially cleaned sand, synthetic grass, newspaper or butchers paper are all good clean substrates.

### **Water**

Ensure water bowls are cleaned regularly and clean drinking water is provided daily.

### **Feeding**

Bearded Dragons are omnivorous, meaning they will eat meat and plant foods. They eat a wide variety of things both in the wild and in captivity. Bearded Dragons will eat mostly insects if you let them, however, is not the best diet for them. Bearded dragons should be feed a variety of insects such as crickets, cockroaches, moths and meal worms (only for adults) which should be supplemented with calcium and vitamin powder occasionally. Also fruits and vegetables should also be provided although no citrus fruits should be feed to them. Leafy greens, sprouts and even frozen mixed vegetables can be fed and provide a suitable source of vitamins and minerals. Food should be offered every 2 to 3 days or smaller amounts more often for juveniles. Fresh water should be provided daily.

## **Handling**

Beaded dragons are very social animals and usually enjoy being handled although juveniles are not as easily handled as adults, but will adjust over time. Also be gentle when handling juveniles as they can be fragile. Be mindful of open doors, windows or other pets if you choose to let your lizard roam the room.

## **Ailments and disorders**

Hygiene is a critically important factor when keeping bearded dragons. It is very important to ensure that food and water are clean and not soiled by faeces and detritus. Provide clean water daily. If you are away from home for a night or two elevate the water bowl so it does not become contaminated with faeces. You can expect to see a lizard lying in the bowl of water when shedding, as the water will help soften the flaking skin.

Bearded dragons can be susceptible to intestinal worms, consult a veterinarian for worming treatments. One of the most common problems associated with bearded dragons is parasitic mites. The mites resemble small black dots and if allowed to grow to large numbers, will cause the lizard enough distress and possible blood loss that it may become susceptible to other diseases.

The most common injuries seen are bite wounds from snapping males, resulting in loss of tail tips, or toes. As long as enclosure hygiene is maintained, these injuries will usually resolve themselves. Young males can fight amongst themselves approaching mating season or until a pecking order is established.