

Bearded Dragon; *Pogona vitticeps*



Adult size; 48- 60Cm (19-24") German Giants can reach 66 Cm (26")

Origin; Australia

Temperature; 21°C to 32°C (90°F to 70°F)

Longevity; 10 years plus

Bearded Dragons are found in the arid, rocky, semi-desert regions and dry open woodlands of Australia. They are good climbers, spending large amounts of time on branches and in bushes. Bearded Dragons can often be found basking on rocks and branches throughout the day.

Housing

Single Bearded Dragons can live comfortably in a 90 x 46 x 46 Cm (36"x18"x18") vivarium. Two can be housed in a 120 x 46 x 46 Cm (48"x18"x18") or Three (1 Male & 2 Females) in a 150 x 46 x 46 Cm (60"x18"x18") though there is no harm in giving them extra space. Although bearded dragons can be housed in groups as hatchlings and juveniles, problems can occur as they mature. Signal males could be housed with groups of females, however males will fight for tertiary and this can result in injuries or worst case result in death.

Substrate

There are a number of different substrate's available for use with Bearded Dragons, some care should be taken as problems can arise as loose substrates can be ingested. This can lead to problems like impaction, this is where a blockage forms within the digestion tract and prevents bowel movements. This is more common in hatchlings and juveniles but can still happen in adults. The best substrate to prevent this is newspaper or paper towel, although this is not always as appealing as a more natural substrate such a beech chips which is more commonly used with adult Bearded Dragons.

Temperature and Lighting

Bearded Dragons cannot make their own body heat so they rely on their environment. They do this by basking under a heat source to warm up or moving away from the heat source to cool down. Heat is required not only for them to keep warm but it is critical for their digestion. Too high or too low of a temperature can cause a loss of appetite, a weakened immune system, slower growth rate and possible health problems.

Bearded Dragons should have a basking area of 32°C to 37°C (90°F to 100°F) with a gradient of 21°C to 23°C (70°F to 75°F) at the cool end. One of the best way to achieve this is using a ceramic heat bulb attached to a thermostat, so that the temperature can be controlled. There are loads of different thermostats on the market so make sure you have the right style for your bulb. The best way to check that your heating equipment is holding the temperatures is by using thermometers at different points within the vivarium. Any heat bulb should have a guard fitted to prevent your bearded Dragon coming in contact with the bulb.

Bearded Dragons are active in the day, they require a UV-A UV-B lighting as this not only provides them with a day to night cycle but it also aids with calcium absorption. We advise a minimum of a 10% UV bulb In summer months Bearded Dragons require 14 hours of 'Daylight' and only 8 hours in winter.

Decor

This is an area of real personal preference, just bear in mind that your bearded Dragon will need strong secure surfaces to climb on as it grows. Last thing you would want is it to fall and injury your Bearded Dragon. Item commonly seen in Bearded Dragon vivariums are; Natural wood, cork bark, bamboo roots, pebbles. Live plants are not really advisable as Bearded Dragon can mistake them for food and eat them.

Diet

Bearded Dragons are omnivores which mean they eat both plant and insect's material. All insect food should be dusted with a calcium powder. Insects that Bearded Dragon will eat are; Crickets, Locusts, Mealworms. By feeding your live food on fresh vegetables and vitamin supplements a day or two before you feed them to your Bearded Dragon, this will allow the live food to contain the maximum amount of nutrients and calcium that your Bearded Dragon will requires to stay strong and healthy, especially when young or for laying females.

Wax worms and pinkie mouse can make a great occasionally treats, wax worms are not best to use as a primary food as they are fatty which can lead to your Bearded Dragon becoming over weight.

They should also be offered plant and vegetable matter daily such as leafy greens e.g. rocket, kale, soft herds. Along with finely grated carrot, peppers, cucumber, green beans, peas, sweet corn and fruits such as banana (small amounts), apple, pear and strawberries. A Plant matter should always be washed thoroughly before feeding to your Bearded Dragon. Bearded Dragons naturally feed in the daytime.

Water

Bearded Dragons originate from a naturally dry environment, so not every Bearded Dragon will drink from a water bowl, most of the hydration they obtain is from the fresh vegetation within their diet, some actively drink when bathed. A water bowl should always be provided and refreshed daily.