

## Bearded Dragon Care Sheet

Starting Supply Checklist (see below for more details):

- Terrarium (Baby: minimum 20 gallon; Adult: minimum 40 gallon)
- 10.0 UVB fluorescent light bulb
- 50-75 watt spot bulb
- Light fixtures
- Calcium powder with or without vitamin D3
- Temperature gun
- Sand-blasted grapevines
- Feeder bugs (crickets or dubia roaches)
- Substrate (sand, reptile carpet, newspaper, and paper towel)
- Ceramic heat emitter

Optional Supplies:

- Thermometers/Hygrometer
- Timer
- Water dish
- Feeding dish
- Hide
- Thermostat

Daytime temperatures:

- 105°F under the basking area
- 80-85°F on the cool side

Nighttime temperature:

- Above 60°F

Feeding:

- Babies – Subadult: feed 2-3 times a day with bugs and vegetables/fruit
- Adult: feed 1-2 times every other day, or as needed
- Offer water in water dish, spray bottle, or bath
- Dust feeder bugs with calcium dust before feeding to bearded dragon
- Remove bugs at the end of the day
- Do not recycle foods
- Do not feed anything bigger than distance between the bearded dragon's eyes

Cleaning:

- Clean the cages daily, or as needed
- Disinfect the cage once a month, or as needed

Notes:

- Bearded dragons are best kept as solitary lizard
- A mature male bearded dragon will become territorial
- A mature female bearded dragon may lay eggs

### *Housing*

Some of the housing options (terrariums) for a bearded dragon are: i.) glass tanks, ii.) wood cages (eg. melamine cages), or iii.) plastic cages (eg. PVC cages). It is important to choose a cage that is the proper size for a bearded dragon. The length of the cage should be approximately 3 times the length of the bearded dragon. Since bearded dragons are not arboreal lizards, the height of the cage does not have to be high - a 14-18 inches is high enough.

A 1-2 months old bearded dragon should be housed in a cage no smaller than a 20 gallon long terrarium. As the baby bearded dragon gets bigger, so should the cage. This will ensure for proper growth rate of the bearded dragon. An adult bearded dragon should be housed in a terrarium that is at least 40 gallon or bigger.

#### **Note:**

DO NOT use a 10 gallon tank to house baby bearded dragons. This size tank does not dissipate heat well, and thus the bearded dragon will quickly dehydrate in the tank, and may potential die from overheating.

### *Lighting and Heating*

Heating the cage to the right temperature is critical for a bearded dragon's health and growth. Providing the proper heat will enable the bearded dragon to digest its food. The daytime temperature around the basking area – that is the area beneath the heat bulb – should be around 105°F. The daytime temperature on the opposite end, the cool side, should be 80-85°F. All lights should be off at night. There is no need to provide additional heat if the ambient temperature is above 60°F at night. Provide a heat source if the temperature at night falls below 60°F.

A 10.0 ultraviolet B (UVB) source is also required so that the bearded dragon can metabolize calcium. A coiled fluorescent bulbs or fluorescent tubes can be used as a UVB light source. If using the coiled version, use a wire screen to filter the UVB output. Direct exposure to the coiled bulb may harm the bearded dragon's eyes.

#### **Note:**

An additional source of UVB and heat is exposure to natural sunlight. If one is allowing their bearded dragon to bask outside, monitor the bearded dragon, and provide shades and protections.

### *Monitoring Behaviors*

Despite being able to house baby or female bearded dragons together, bearded dragons are territorial/solitary lizards. Thus, a pet bearded dragon does not need a cage mate. Adult male bearded dragons should never be housed together as they will fight and injure each other. If housing baby or female bearded dragons together, they should be similar in size. Additionally, the bearded dragons should be monitored to ensure that (i) there are no aggression being displayed and (ii) all bearded dragons are getting access to food and water.

Male and female bearded dragons will display different behaviors when they are sexually mature. Males reach maturity at about 7-8 months old and will start displaying head bobbing behaviors, as well as will attempt to breed. Alternatively, females reach maturity around 12-14 months old. A female may display similar behavior to a male when they are ready to breed. It is natural for an adult female bearded dragon to have unfertile eggs even if not bred, and thus should be monitored annually for eggs. If a female bearded dragon has eggs, a separate bin filled with substrate needs to be set up so that the female bearded dragon can lay her eggs. If the eggs are not laid, the female bearded dragon will become egg-bound which will dramatically shorten the life span of the female bearded dragon.

### *Minimizing Stress*

A bearded dragon will be stressed when it is being relocated. Minimizing relocation stress may involve (i) handling the bearded dragon less for the first 2-3 weeks after it has arrived, (ii) covering the two sides and the back (if you are using glass terrarium) with white papers, (iii) placing the cage at waist level or higher, (iv) re-adjusting the bearded dragon's cage setup to suit the bearded dragon's preference, and/or (v) making sure the

Updated: September 20, 2019

temperatures are correct. On rare occasion, limiting the presence of other pets (i.e. dogs or cats) or minimizing noises will also help in reducing the stress level of a bearded dragon.

### *Cleaning the Cage*

The cage should be cleaned daily, or as needed. A cage should, as well as cage decors should be disinfected at least once a month, or as needed. For any newly purchased bearded dragon it should be quarantined - that is, it should be housed individually. If possible, the cage should be in a separate room from other reptiles and pets. The quarantined bearded dragon should be monitored for any signs of illnesses, etc. prior to introducing it in with other bearded dragon(s) and/or pet(s). Note, stools are filled with harmless microbes; however, it may contain opportunistic pathogens that may cause illness for humans and/or other animals.

### *Decorating the Cage*

All cage decors should be kept to a minimum for baby-juvenile bearded dragons. The purpose of this is to allow for the bearded dragon to easily hunt for their food and for easy monitoring. Furthermore, this limits the crevices where the feeder bugs can hide in. Feeder bugs should be removed once the lights go off. Feeder bugs will chew on the bearded dragon's scales and skins when the bearded dragon is asleep. As the bearded dragon gets bigger, different cage décor and furnishings can be introduced into its cage. Logs and hides should be big enough for your bearded dragon to climb onto or to hide in, respectively. Additionally, a piece of flat rock (placed underneath the basking bulb) can be used to absorb and radiate the heat inside the cage. The source of underbelly heat will aid in the digestion of food.

### *Substrates*

Sifted children play sand, newspapers, paper towels, shelf liners and cage liners (eg. reptile carpet) can be used as substrate for a bearded dragon terrarium. It is highly recommended that a baby or a juvenile bearded dragon be kept on paper towel or newspaper, and not on sand. Ingestion of sand may potentially lead to causing impaction. Furthermore, paper towel or newspaper enables easy cleaning, as well as for monitoring of its stool. Once a dragon is 12 inches or longer, it can be switched over to other substrates.

### *Feedings*

The staple feeder bugs are:

1. Crickets
2. Dubia roaches
3. Reptiworms/Phoenix worms
4. Silkworms

Feeder bugs that should only be offered as treats are:

5. Superworms
6. Hornworms
7. Butterworms

Some of the staple vegetables are:

1. Mustard Green
2. Collard Green
3. Dandelion Green
4. Shredded Summer Squashes
5. Shredded Carrot

Bearded dragons are omnivores and should be offered a diet of insects and plants. There are a variety of feeder bugs to feed to a bearded dragon. Do not feed anything bigger than the distance between the bearded dragon's eye balls to baby and young bearded dragons. Feeding big bugs to baby and young bearded dragons can potentially cause an impaction. Remove any remaining bugs at the end of the day to eliminate the risk of the

Updated: September 20, 2019

bugs chewing on the bearded dragon's scales at night. Furthermore, do not recycle feeder bugs. They will sample on the bearded dragon's stool making them vectors for transmitting potential infectious microbes to other reptiles. Similarly, do not recycle vegetables and fruits.

A baby up to a sub-adult bearded dragon should be fed 2-3 times daily. Start with feeding vegetables and/or fruits first. Feeder bugs should be dusted with calcium powder for every feeding. For a bearded dragon that is kept indoor, use calcium powder containing vitamin D3 to dust the feeders before feeding to a bearded dragon. The vitamin D3 is to aid in metabolizing calcium. For a bearded dragon exposed to natural sunlight, feeder bugs can be dusted with calcium powder that does not contain vitamin D3. As a bearded dragon reaches a maturity it should be offered more vegetables and fruits than feeder bugs. Feeding frequencies can be reduced to every other day for an adult bearded dragon. Dusting the feeders with calcium powder can also be reduced to every other day for an adult bearded dragon. Finally, despite feeder bugs, vegetables, and fruits serving as water source for the bearded dragon, a bearded dragon should be offered water by providing a water tray, spritzing it with water from a spray bottle, or bathing it.