

PET

# BEARDED DRAGON

(*Pogona vitticeps*, *Pogona henrylawsoni*)

*All Australian lizards are protected species in Australia. To keep one as a pet in NSW you will need a reptile licence.*

The most popular of Bearded Dragons include the Pygmy Bearded Dragon (*P. henrylawsoni*). This dragon will grow to about 15-20cm & is native to central Queensland.

The Central Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*) is native to the desert & woodland areas of central Australia & will grow to about 30 cm. The average lifespan is around 10 years for pygmies and up to 18 years for centrals.

The best sized enclosure for your dragon will depend on what species you decide to keep you keep. Staff can advise you on the best size for your species. The decor should include logs & rocks for climbing & basking.

A hide cave will also give your dragon a secure resting spot to retreat to.



**Substrate-** Sand is a great substrate for older dragons (over 6 months), however hatchlings & juveniles are best kept on paper or paper towel. This removes any risk of impactions (impaction is a condition where a bearded dragon's digestive tract is blocked by a solid or semi-solid mass) consuming sand during feeding and movement. Just remember that anything taken from a natural environment will house foreign matter possibly including mites & insects. Also be wary of pesticide spraying around your source site.

*Reptiles are ectothermic & require an environmental heat source to reach maximum body temperature*



**Heat Source-** Dragons require overhead heat. The temperature gauge for these dragons is on their forehead – known as the third eye. A heat gradient of 24-34 C is ideal for this species. This would have the hot area under the heat source as being around 32 C while at the other end of the setup, lower temps of around 24-26 C. This allows your pet to move in & out of maximum heat as it requires.

Depending on where you live, your dragon may also require additional heat in the form of a heat mat. A thermostat should be used to control the temperature in the enclosure.

Dragons also require a source of UVA and UVB light. A fluorescent 10.0 reptile tube over the top of the enclosure is the most effective way to achieve this. A lack of access to this light source will lead long term health problems for your dragon.





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*Bearded Dragons love to eat cricket's,  
woodies & mealworms.*

**Diet** – Being omnivorous, these lizards like a lot of variety in their diet. Protein can be offered in the form of crickets, woodies & occasional mealworms (all available from We Know Pets).

Also provide equal quantities vegetables that can include Asian greens, endive, broccoli, grated carrot, yellow dandelions, kale, sweet potato, apple, pear, melons, berries & occasional banana.

Weekly supplementation with a reptile vitamin & mineral powder and twice weekly calcium powder, is also beneficial for healthy growth, maintenance and & shedding. Food should be taken at the end of each day & a constant water source should be provided at all times. Dragons can also be trained to eat a pellet diet.

**Feeding frequency** – Juvenile lizards can be offered food every day. Adults can be offered greens every day with a protein added every other day. Food is best offered in the morning, after they have had time to move around & have become active. Remove any uneaten food at the end of each day.

**Water** - Clean fresh water should be kept in a shallow dish so as to allow easy access for drinking & soaking as your pet requires with no risk of drowning.

**Behaviour** – In a small captive environment Central Dragons are best housed individually.

Pygmies are more social & have a dominance hierarchy within groups. Males should not be housed together at adulthood as aggression and injury may be encountered.

Females & juveniles will be submissive. They will often greet each other by touching one another's face with their tongue.

*Ecdysis or shedding is a natural occurrence  
& is related to growth in juveniles & slows  
down in frequency with adult lizards.*

**Shedding**- A weekly bath in warm water will help keep your dragon hydrated & aid with shedding.

Never leave them unattended if bathing & be sure to have shallow water that they can stand in without submerging, in their enclosure.

**Health** - During the cooler months, your lizard may go into a cooling period called brumation. Expect that you dragon will go "into hiding" where it feels safe, & stops feeding. You are able to reduce your light cycle (from 14 to 8 hours) & turn off heating when this occurs. There is no need to offer them food during these cooling months. However, it is preferable to keep the heat available to your lizard to keep it active & feeding. Most reptiles won't feed if the temperature drops to below 20C as they cannot digest their food which can be detrimental to the animal's health.

