



## **BEARDED DRAGONS'**

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT BEARDED DRAGON;

1. 120cmx60cmx60cm VIVARIUM
2. UV LIGHTING 10-12% 2/3 LENGTH OF TANK
3. SPOT HEATING SOURCE (150W) WITH THERMOSTAT
4. BROAD RANGE VITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENT
5. NATURAL BEARDED DRAGON SUITABLE SUBSTRATE
6. HIDES AND FURNITURE

Vivarium Set-Up Your Spot Bulb should be positioned at one end of the vivarium, creating a hot basking end. The opposite end should have no heating, creating a cool end. This will create a temperature gradient. Always use a Thermostat to regulate temperature. Placement of your sensor can be done in a couple of ways to create the desired gradient of temperature. Your thermostat sensor should always be placed on or just above the substrate You can either place your thermostat sensor in the middle of your vivarium to set the ambient temperature, 30c/86f. You should be achieving basking temperatures of at least 35c/95f to 45c/113f. There should always be a cool end temperature of 28c/82f or less. If you are struggling to achieve this, please consult one of our experts for advice on how to improve this situation.

Useful tip. Your spot bulb must be turned off at night as your animal requires a minimum of 6 hours darkness. The optimal nighttime ambient temperature is 24c-26c/75f-78f. Although they can tolerate slightly lower temperatures overnight this should not be for a long period. To combat low night temperatures, you can extend your animals daytime, by leaving the bulbs running longer. For example, 12 hours to 16

hours. You can place rocks in the enclosure that will absorb IR A and B during the day and release IR C once the bulbs turn off. If the room is below 22c/72f for most of the night then a ceramic bulb can replace your spot bulb and be left running through the night to maintain the temperature, provided the animal has the previously mentioned cool end temperature or better still a thermostat with a day/night function. Do not ever use a heat mat or heat rock under your animal.

When positioning hides and decor in the environment, always allow space directly under the heating element to allow the heat to reach the floor. This will help your vivarium function more efficiently, prevent super high temperature build up around the bulb and stop the floor from becoming cold. Although IR light is invisible to us it still reflects off a surface. It is still important to place hides etc around the enclosure. We would suggest they are placed just off centre of your heating source. UV lighting is essential for a minimum of 12-14 hours a day. The UV tube should be placed on the ceiling and should start against the wall at the hot end and span at least 2/3 the length of the enclosure thus creating a UV gradient much like your heating.

We recommend a good quality 12% T5 tube, however a T8 tube is fine when used with a reflector. Always speak to an expert that knows the products capabilities, as the amount of effective uv reduces over distance. Word of warning. Do not lower a tube down the wall of an enclosure or use a tube that is rated higher than the distance you require the UV to travel. Reptiles have adapted to living with UV radiation from above. Incorrect use of UV products could damage your animals eyes severely (photo keratoconjunctivitis or cataracts) symptoms include swelling of the eye and area around it or cloudy eye/s. This is thankfully not too common but it is better to be safe and not allow your animal to sit alongside or within a few inches of your tube or bulb. Always remember to replace your T8 UV tube every 6 months and T5 tubes every 12 months, unless the manufacturer suggests otherwise. The tube's UV producing capability will degrade, though the tube will show no obvious sign. Failure to give your new Bearded Dragon the proper levels and quality of UV could result in irreversible Metabolic Bone Disorder.

Never place your vivarium near radiators, direct sunlight, drafts, busy areas or appliances that create a lot of noise.

#### Substrate, Cleaning and Furniture

There are several suitable substrates you can use. We prefer to use a natural substrate made specifically for Bearded Dragon. Habi stats Bearded Dragon Bedding is a great sand/clay mix and comes recommended. With the correct heating/temperatures and vitamin/minerals being provided there is little to no risk of impaction. We do however recommend against loose fine desert sand (play sand) and other clearly unsuitable substrates which can pose a genuine risk to health.

Spot clean your tank regularly, if done properly a full tank clean should only be necessary once a month at most. Only use disinfectants specifically designed for reptiles. Soaps, detergents and other disinfectants can be toxic.

Useful tip. Always provide your Bearded dragon with clean fresh drinking water, tap water is fine, although there are water treatments available if in doubt. Always get all your tank furniture from a recognised dealer, and remember Bearded dragons eat plant matter, so don't use live plants (unless edible) and make sure you don't allow your Bearded dragon to eat any plastic or silk plants that you may use.

Feeding And Vitamins Reptiles need to feel safe in their home. We don't just add tank furniture, hides etc for stimulation. Caves and hides alone are not the only way to make them feel safe. Every time you put a new log or ornament in the animals enclosure it will make your animal feel safer. It offers the animal another area it no longer needs to watch for predators and another pocket of safety. By contrast, despite the misconception that less hides means you'll see the animal more, the truth is that most will likely feel vulnerable in such an open space and fail to come out much at all. When planning your new enclosure, don't forget to allow plenty of space for furniture if you want your animal to be happy. Many different feeding routines and diets have been used with varying levels of success the best suited to this set-up and new keepers will be explained below.

Bearded dragons from ten weeks old should be given 3-4 meals a week. Younger animals will generally need more insects than veg and older animals vice versa. The plant matter part of the diet is made up of 90% dark leafy greens (salad bag) and 10% fruits and vegetables (flavour and colour). List of don't feeds

- Do not use vegetables etc. with high water content, such as Iceberg lettuce
- Do not use citrus fruits
- Do not use vegetables with high starch content, such as potatoes
- Do not use tomato seeds or sweet corn as they are indigestible
- Do not use too much cabbage or any other plants of the Brassica genus (Brussels, broccoli, kale), as they contain large amounts of goitrogens. This has a bad effect on many metabolic processes
- Do not use too much, spinach, strawberry, tomatoes or any other plant that contains large amounts of oxalates
  - Never use Parsley
  - Never use Avocado
  - Never use Rhubarb

## Safe foods

- Weeds such as dandelions. You can also buy from any good exotics pet dealer packs of weed seeds
- Mustard greens
- Endive
- Rocket
- Most basic Pre bagged salad leaves
- Watercress
- Squash
- Green beans • Asparagus
- Herbs such as Mint, Basil and Fennel (Also useful to add flavour)
- To add flavour, Mango, Papaya, Bell pepper, Apple, kiwi, carrot
- As occasional treats only, Grapes, Blueberries, Rose petals, and Hibiscus and Pansy flowers

These are just some ideas. There are many plants, flowers, vegetables and fruits you can use. There are many good sites online where you will find many more ideas. It is worth remembering that if you take foods from outside to check no pesticides or fertilizers have been used nearby. Also never give your animal anything from the side of the road due to exhaust fumes. The best way to judge what quantity of vegetable matter constitutes as a meal, is to put a sizeable amount of food in, in the morning and remove in the evening. You can always top up as the day goes on. Insect quantities can be difficult to gauge. The best way to judge what quantity of jumping insects constitutes as a meal is to drop a limited amount, say half a dozen crickets, locusts or roaches. If your animal is hungry, it will eat immediately. If it does, continue to put a couple of insects in every time it finishes, until your Bearded dragon appears full (waiting for food to come to them). Remember never leave excess crickets in the vivarium, as they can cause injury to your animal! Bearded dragons will also eat so much that they fill their stomachs with food, then continue to feed, packing food end to end down their oesophagus. Try to avoid this happening. With mealworms and waxworms, treat them like veg and place in a bowl for a day. Mealworms also contain high levels of phosphorus to calcium. Even with added calcium the levels can cause undetectable issues and as such should not make up a substantial amount of the animal's diet. Bearded dragons can be very picky with their food. Quite often when presented with an abundance of food they will just eat what they fancy and wait for the next time it becomes available. Be strict! These animals have no idea what a good diet is and in a

wild situation the wild dictates the available nutrition. For this reason, we need to keep the animal keen to eat. We don't suggest feeding every day and we suggest only using one food type (Greens, jumping insects or worms/grubs) if the animal chooses not to eat this meal, then substitutes should not be given. You don't want the animal to know what is coming or when. Hopefully this will keep your animal keen to eat and give them a broad and balanced diet. A good quality vitamin and mineral supplement is essential to the well-being of your animal, always read the packaging carefully. We recommend Earth Pro A on every meal. This is a great all round natural supplement that is impossible to overdose.

Failure to maintain a good supply of vitamins and minerals will result in irreversible illness, such as Metabolic Bone Disorder. Handling, Health and Additional Notes Do not handle your Bearded dragon immediately after a move, leave at least four weeks to allow your animal to settle. If you don't, one of two things will happen.

1. Your animal may become defensive and aggressive
2. Your animal may become reclusive and fail to feed properly Despite the initial appearance of a relaxed animal the animal is assessing its new environment.

You could convince the animal you are a predator if you show the animal too much interest early on. After the initial four weeks handling may begin slowly in the enclosure, provided the animal seems relaxed, accessing the different areas of the enclosure and eating well. Bearded dragons are naturally friendly; you do not need to restrain or excessively handle them to make them good pets. Always handle your animal near to a surface, accidents can happen, and Bearded dragons don't fly! Always use common sense when handling animals. When it comes to your animal's health, if you are ever in doubt ask a respected dealer, and if still in doubt go to a specialist veterinarian. There are a few simple things to look out for.

1. Unusual lethargy
2. Prolonged lack or loss of appetite
3. Eyes sinking back into the head (dehydration)
4. Eyes unclear and or sticky
5. Runny nose
6. Prolonged diarrhoea It is also worth noting that exposure to high humidity on a regular basis or prolonged exposure can be hazardous to your Dragons health.

They come from a very dry part of the world and are adapted to dealing with it very well. Do not spray them or leave them sitting in baths of water (unless sick, then consult a vet). These things can lead to lung and skin infections if done excessively. Avoid putting

your Bearded dragon in with any other animals, they are very territorial. If purchasing a second Bearded dragon, make sure they are of compatible size and get equal amounts of food to ensure the same rate of growth. Often it is worth leaving an abundance of food (i.e. veg and mealworms, not crickets and locust. These can be fed in moderation, daily) in the enclosure for the first month or so is a good idea before moving to the diet we describe above. Make sure you acquire a bigger enclosure and if possible, provide two basking spots at the same end to avoid competition over space and heat. However, it is very important to understand Bearded dragons are not gregarious. More than one animal in an enclosure is not advised. They will not see the other as a friend or company, only ever as competition. Despite some success stories they often don't get along long term. Ask a respected dealer for more information. To summarise, Bearded dragons make great pets, well suited to almost any household. Active diurnal animals, with a great personality. In the correct set-up with the proper care needed they will be simple to keep and we're sure there is something about them everyone will love.

If you have any problems then please feel free to contact aurora reptiles.

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