

Bearded Dragon Care Guide

Prepared by Dr. Lucy Haile on behalf of Wellesley Animal Hospital

HOUSING

- Paper towels, newspaper or repti-carpet are preferable to line the bottom of the cage
- Avoid sand, gravel, or small particle materials; can be harmful to your beardie
- A single adult beardie requires a minimum 50-gallon aquarium, larger if possible, for solitary use only



UVB LIGHTS

- UVB light is required for approx. 12 hours/day for vitamin D production and to allow for calcium absorption
- Ensure there is no plastic or glass between your UVB light and your beardie as this will filter the UVB light available
- UVB bulbs require replacement every 6 months. Set a reminder on your phone or calendar to change bulb

HEATING

- Always ensure there is a thermal gradient in the cage i.e., there is a hot and cold side
- Temperatures:

Basking Spot: ~ 100F Hot side: 85-95F Cold side: 75-80F Nighttime: 60-70F

- Ideally have a separate thermometer in each of these areas
- Avoid hot rocks as these can burn your beardie

DIET

Bearded dragons are omnivorous and require a mixture of protein sources and vegetables. As they age they require less protein and eat mainly plants and vegetables.

- Adult diet: approximately 20% insects and 80% vegetables/plants
- Juvenile diet: approximately 50% insects and 50% vegetables/plants

INSECTS

- Always remove any live uneaten insects after 20 minutes as they can cause injuries to your bearded dragon
- Feed adults two to three times per week
- Feed juveniles once to twice daily
- Always offer fresh water to your insects –the best way to do this is to have a small amount of damp paper towel with your insects
- Insects must be gut loaded before being fed to your lizard -a starved insect will result in a starved lizard
- We recommend gut loading insects with Mazuri Hi-calcium gut loading formula, at least 48-72 hours before feeding the insects to your beardie. This diet can always be available to your insects

COMMERCIAL PELLETS

- Pellets, not cubes, formulated for bearded dragons can be fed moistened with water
- These should be less than 50% of the diet

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FRESH PRODUCE

- Feed adults once a day to every other day
- Feed juveniles once to twice a day
- Feed a variety of:
 - chopped dark leafy greens: kale, collards, mustards, turnip, radish and dandelion
 - lettuces: red leaf, green leaf and romaine
 - vegetables: carrots, squash, zucchini, peas and beans
 - flowers: roses, nasturtiums, carnations and hibiscus
- Limit the amount of fruit given. Ideally this should be less than 5% of the diet

SUPPLEMENTS

- Dust insects in a calcium carbonate supplement (without vitamin D3) 2-3 times a week
- Dust insects in a multivitamin supplement 1-2 times monthly. Ensure this supplement contains vitamin D and beta-carotene and/or carotenoids as the source of vitamin A
- To dust insects place in a Ziploc bag and gently shake. The insects will groom off the dusting so be sure to feed them immediately after this
- If in doubt if your multivitamin contains the correct supplements bring it along with you to your next veterinary visit

WATER

- Provide water in a shallow dish always, ensuring the bowl is large enough for your bearded dragon to soak in
- Soaking your beardie two times a week in warm shallow water for 10-15minutes increases hydration and helps with shedding

HEALTH CARE

- Your beardie will hide all signs of illness from you. We recommend a new patient exam followed by yearly wellness examinations including fecal testing to help detect the first signs of sickness
- Wellness examinations are also a good opportunity to discuss nutrition and care of your beardie with your veterinarian as the most common disorders in reptiles are caused by nutritional imbalances
- We recommend bringing all supplements, boxes the lights came in and a photo of the cage to review with your veterinarian during exams
- Weighing your beardie on a weekly basis (at the same time of day each time) can help to detect early signs of illness. We recommend purchasing a kitchen gram scale and placing your bearded dragon in a small plastic container such as a Tupperware box on this
- If you notice that your beardie's weight drops by 10% of its previous body weight contact your veterinarian immediately
- If you notice a gradual decrease in weight contact your veterinarian to discuss causes
- Weighing your bearded dragon becomes especially important whenever you are changing the diet or if your beardie is sick. Being prepared and getting your beardie used to being weighed before these events will decrease the stress during an already stressful time
- If you notice a decrease in appetite, decreased in droppings, trouble shedding or your bearded dragon acting more lethargic please contact your veterinarian