**Bearded Dragon – Care Sheet**

**Bearded Dragon:** Pogona vitticeps

For those wishing to adopt a reptile, bearded dragons can make excellent pets for the beginner. “Beardies” have a lot of personality and quickly learn to get along with human owners. Making sure to note the following information can help you raise a happy, healthy beardie.

**General Info**

Age: 8-12 years

Size: 18-24 inches (including the tail)

Weight: 10-18 ounces

Sexual maturity: 1 years

Egg laying: 4-5 weeks after breeding, 18-30 eggs

Incubation period: 60-80 days

**Behavior**

A young bearded dragon may be skittish at first. As they grow older, however, they quickly become accustomed to humans. You should always supervise small children when they wish to handle your beardie.

Beardies have very expressive personalities. That is why it is important to understand what certain body language means. Your beardie could be asking you to leave it alone, and if you do not, it could eventually try to bite you. While they are not normally aggressive, you should look for signs like fluffing their beard or the beard turning black, hissing or opening its mouth, biting, or head bobbing. Your beardie slowly (or quickly) raising its head up and down can be an attempt to assert dominance.

While beardies become quite friendly with their owners, they may be territorial if you try to put more than one in the same cage. We recommend separate cages for each lizard.

**Diet**

Bearded dragons are omnivores. Young beardies will eat mostly live prey, but you should offer them fresh salads early on so they’ll be more willing to eat them later. As they reach their adult size, they transition to eating more vegetables and fewer insects. An adult bearded dragon should receive salads daily to every other day and insects 1-2 times per week.

Good food choices include:

* Healthy greens like mustard greens, turnip greens, collard greens, dandelion greens; others can be offered only for variety
* Various squashes, zucchini, sweet potato, bell peppers
* Broccoli, other green veggies, shredded carrots
* Snow or snap peas, green beans
* Fruit offered as a treat
* Crickets, Dubia roaches, and phoenix worms are good staple prey items
* Superworms, waxworms, and mealworms can be offered for variety, but are high in fat so they should not be staples

Make sure the pieces of food are shredded or cut up into small enough pieces for your beardie to eat it. Mist the salad with water to keep it fresh and encourage water intake. Adults should have their food dusted with a phosphorus-free calcium supplement once or twice a week while young, growing beardies should have this done 4-5 times a week. A once weekly multivitamin is also recommended for both juveniles and adults. Of course, make sure your beardie always has fresh, clean water available. It may also be necessary to soak your beardie in warm water 1-3 times a week so it gets enough water.

**Environment & Caging**

Your bearded dragon will need plenty of space for moving around as it grows older. While it only needs a 10-20 gallon tank when less than a year old, we recommend a cage that is at least 4 ft. x 2 ft. x 2ft. for an adult beardie. The cage should:

* Be kept at a temperature of 80ºF on the cool side with a basking area of 95-105ºF. Good ways to provide heat include ceramic heat emitters, basking lights, or PowerSun Mercury Vapor bulbs, which also provide UV light.
* Contains a UV light that provides light in the UVB spectrum. It will be necessary to replace the bulb even if it is still producing light. Do not let glass or plastic sit between your lizard and the light. We recommend either T5 or T8 tube-type lights or ZooMed PowerSuns for bearded dragons. Remember all UVB lights have specific distances that they should be placed from the animal, some produce heat and some don’t, so you need to choose what’s appropriate for your cage.
* Use tile, reptile carpet, paper towels or newspapers as bedding.
* Contain branches, ramps, and rocks for climbing and basking. Make sure to include a hollow piece or cave that your beardie can hide in when it wants.

If you are breeding, it is important to make separate habitats

for the hatchlings, as they may be aggressive toward each other.

Some adults even will try to eat their young.

**Veterinary Care & Preventive Care**

We recommend a physical examination every 6-12 months, so a vet can perform a fecal examination and order blood tests if necessary. In the meantime, look out for warning signs of health problems like anorexia, weight loss, lethargy, trembling, limping, swollen belly, constipation, diarrhea, or a change in behavior.

Additionally, as a reptile owner, it is important to wash your hands with warm soap and water every time after handling your bearded dragon. Many reptiles carry salmonella, which can make you sick if you do not take the proper precautions.