

OVERVIEW						
<p>The Bearded Dragon (<i>Pogona vitticeps</i>) is one of the best reptile pets due to its personable nature, robust yet reasonable size, and hardiness. However, its care is a bit more involved than that of a cornsnake, leopard gecko or crested gecko and keepers need to appreciate its need for considerable space, UVB AND HEAT LIGHTING and an omnivorous diet with good gut-loading and supplementation. As long as these needs are adequately addressed, the Beardie can be a tame and rewarding pet with a lifespan of 7-10 years or more.</p>						
ENVIRONMENT						
Conditions »	Day Temp	75-90°F	Basking Hot Spot Temp	100-110°F	Humidity	40-50%
Heat Source »	Basking heat; thermostat-controlled undertank heat mat at one end of enclosure.					
HOUSING	<p>Baby Bearded Dragons require a 15-20 gallon aquarium with either a bare floor or paper towel or newsprint as substrate. Keeping them in groups will require more space (and more food) to prevent competition and tail-nipping and other injuries due to fighting. Males and females can only be kept together as babies. Beardies grow quickly and a juvenile or young adult will require a 40-55 gallon tank with 75 gallon or larger custom reptile enclosures being required for adults. Males must be housed alone at this size. Plastic storage tubs of similar sizes may also be used. Although many breeders keep their adults on sand, substrate choice for Beardies is a hotly debated topic. The use of indented kraft paper or newsprint will eliminate ingestion problems. Beardies love to climb and grapewood vine or other branches and rocks that cannot topple over and cause injury are important. These should be placed to allow the lizard(s) to move closer to heat lamp and thermoregulate. Beardies also love to hide and hollow logs or similar should be provided.</p> <p>UVB LIGHTING IS MANDATORY! ZooMed Repti-Sun 10.0 is recommended. HEAT LIGHTING IS ALSO MANDATORY. Beardies are basking, daytime-active lizards and require a powerful reptile heat lamp that will create a 100-110°F basking spot. Use a non-contact temp gun to check temperature often. Do not use "heat rocks" or other substrate heaters. Provide artificial sun! A nighttime drop to 70-75°F is good. Locate the cage where the ambient temp is above 70°F.</p>					
DIET	<p>Bearded Dragons are omnivorous. They require both plant matter in the form of dark, leafy greens and insects with a dietary shift with age. Young dragons are more insectivorous, whereas adults should feed almost exclusively on greens. Leafy greens must be offered daily and should be varied to include mustard greens, collard greens, turnip greens, dandelions, escarole, chicory, and arugula. Iceberg lettuce is nutritionally void and should not be used. Romaine is also less desirable than the aforementioned greens. Spinach, kale and swiss chard should be avoided as they are high in oxalic acids that bind calcium. Greens should be chopped or shredded to make pieces smaller than the dragons' heads. Plant matter should be primarily greens, but the follow vegetables may also be grated and included: squashes, green beans, sweet potato, yams, and carrot.</p> <p>Insects should be offered to babies two or three times a day, to juveniles daily, and to adults several times a week or not at all. Multiple daily feedings are required by babies not only due to their growth, but to minimize tail-nipping and other biting. Smaller or weaker babies should be separated from faster-growing aggressive babies. Crickets, roaches, silkworms and superworms are the standard insect fare and crickets or other insects should be no more than half the width of a baby's head.</p> <p>Insects should be fed a commercial gut-load diet for 12 hours or more prior to being offered and should be dusted with a quality reptile calcium/mineral supplement regularly.</p>					

