

# Bayntons Reptiles

## Information Care Sheet

### ENCLOSURE

The Enclosure you buy and furnish will be your bearded dragon's home. The primary idea behind providing them a great environment to live in is to get as close to their natural habitat as possible.

Being that bearded dragons are native to areas of central Australia; they have all the land they could possibly want to roam and hunt and play and be free. We obviously can't duplicate this in our homes, but we can at least give them plenty of room to live.

Keep in mind that you'll want room enough for your beardie to move around freely. You want enough space to have a hot and a cool side. You'll need room for one or two (preferably two!) places for them to hide. You'll also need room for sticks or branches etc. as bearded dragons love to climb. This gives them both exercise and a way to move closer to or further from their basking light. Their enclosure should have enough height to allow this!

- The size I suggest is 4ft long x 2ft deep x 2ft high
- A basking spot of about 42°C – 44°C

In keeping with trying to simulate their native land here in Australia, proper temperatures are another critical element. Their native lands are hot in the day but get cool at night. Simulating this temperature variance is important for several reasons.

*Monitor your basking temps closely!*

Bearded dragons are ectotherms. This means they cannot regulate their own body temperatures like humans or other warm-blooded animals. They rely on external temperatures to do this for them.

This means that when they need heat, they have to find a source of it. When they need cool, they must find a spot that's cool. This isn't just a preference thing. It's necessary for several key bodily functions.

*One of the most important is digestion.*

Without external heat, bearded dragons cannot digest their food. This can lead to impaction, malnutrition, and other serious issues.

For this reason, it's very important that we provide a basking spot for our bearded dragons that's hot enough to aid proper digestion. How hot should it be? It depends on the age of your beardie. Usually, a basking spot of 42-44 is safe.

### A UVB LIGHT

One thing the Australian terrain has that your house most assuredly does not is lots of bright sunlight. Simulating the UV content of the sun's rays is another must-have for a healthy bearded dragon.



First, a warning—do NOT put your enclosure in direct sunlight!!! This is a common mistake many bearded dragon owners make, and it is very dangerous for your beardie. The glass walls of your beardie's home do not allow the open ventilation available in the wild. Instead, the glass walls of your bearded dragon's home act more like the four walls of an oven. They keep heat in and don't let any out. A well-meaning bearded dragon owner can quickly kill their beardie by leaving their enclosure in the sun!

So, how do we give our little reptilian friends the gift of indoor sunlight without baking them alive?

- With a UVB light source.

UVB and UVA radiation are the parts of the sun's rays that your bearded dragon needs. Specifically, UVB allows your beardie to convert vitamin D to useable calcium. By useable, we mean that it can be shuttled to their bones where it helps keep them strong and healthy.

Without the proper amount of UVB light, bearded dragons can develop metabolic bone disease (MBD). MBD is an unfortunately common disease that presents itself in older beardies who have spent their lives unable to get enough calcium.

You can get the proper amount of UVB with a dedicated UVB bulb or by using a combination basking/UVB bulb (mercury vapor). Lighting, on the whole, is a tricky thing to get right at first, but your Beardie will thank you for it.

*Follow with a cool side to their tank at 28 degrees.*

Once we get the basking spot and UVB lighting all set up for our bearded dragon, this sometimes causes another problem. While they like the heat, they also need a place to be cool.

Their lights should be on timers. Twelve hours on and twelve hours off is a good recommendation. The second is that their basking spot should be all the way on one side of the vivarium. This leaves the other side at a cooler temperature throughout the day.

## **WATER**

The fact that a bearded dragon needs hydration is not a subject of debate. How they get it, on the other hand, seems to be the subject of some controversy.

There are 4 primary ways a bearded dragon can get the water they need. The options are drinking from a bowl, misting, baths, and from their food.

It's common to hear many bearded dragon owners say things like "my beardie won't drink from a bowl". While this is true for some beardies, we don't feel like this is a good reason not to leave them a bowl of water just leave it down the cool end to prevent respiratory problems.

A note to those who live in a humid climate, ideally, you want your enclosure to be dry. In humid climates, sometimes misting and water bowls can raise the humidity level too high, thus inviting respiratory infections.

Leave a bowl of water out for them. Make sure it's clean and replenished regularly. Some people recommend you treat the drinking water you give your reptiles with a special additive. We use bottled water instead. Either way works great! Even if you never see them drink from their bowl, it's a great idea just in case! Many beardies will simply splash through their water bowl, but even this is helpful for them.

Give your beardie regular baths! This is important for many reasons. Many beardies will take the opportunity to drink while in their bath. They love it warm!

Fun fact about bearded dragons is that their head is shaped in such a way that it funnels moisture from their heads down to their mouths. Regular misting gives them an opportunity to drink this way.

Lastly, bearded dragons are very efficient at making use of the water present in their food. A well-fed bearded dragon who gets regular servings of greens will be able to get a good amount of its needed hydration from their veggies.

Notice we said, “a good amount”!

Greens every day!

Mmmmmm, salad!

To see all the food you can and can't feed a bearded dragon, GOOGLE and learn.

Bearded dragon needs both protein and veggies. Protein FROM THERE BUGS GIVE A VARIETY.

Exactly which veggies will vary between bearded dragons.

Your beardie's age will determine what percentage of their diet is greens, but no matter their age, they do need regular greens. Just remember to wash them thoroughly before giving them to your beardie. Residual pesticides and bacteria are not good for your beardie at all!

*Gut loaded feeder insects.*

In the wild, bearded dragons are omnivores who eat a mix of vegetation and insects. In captivity, it's up to us to give them a varied diet that consists of both of these things.

Quality bugs and not stuff you catch!

*I suggest Brian's worms on Facebook, awesome guy very helpful:*

[www.briansworms.com](http://www.briansworms.com)

We prefer wood roaches as our feeder insect of choice and Black Soldier Fly Larvae.

*For black soldier fly larvae or BSFL, Joshie's Dragons are a good supplier:*

<https://joshiesdragons.com/bsfl-shop-now>

You can also use crickets or various types of worms (worms are better as a treat) crickets are not our choice but are fine.

These feeder insects should be “gut-loaded.” This means you should feed the insects a diet of things that are good for your bearded dragon. Basically, feed them healthy greens. You can also buy gutload or grind up bearded dragon pellets as they make a great gutload.

Since your bearded dragon is inherently a prey animal, it needs a place to hide.

This isn't a want to or a nice to have - they really do need a place to hide. They may not use it often, but it's important that it's there when they want it. Some beardies will use it as a place to sleep. Others will use it when stressed. At least one hide is essential in any bearded dragon enclosure. Make sure you provide one for your beardie.

## HUMAN CONTACT

While they do like to hide when stressed or if they feel threatened (and also brumate).

Sure, you could stick your bearded dragon in a well-furnished enclosure and never interact with them. They won't die from it. But they won't be as happy as they could be either. They also won't be able to cope with interaction when it's necessary. There are several times when human interaction is required. A dragon who is not regularly handled will have a much harder time with this than one who has regular people time under their belt!

At a minimum, you should have your beardie checked once a year by a vet. You should also be cutting their nails regularly, a task made infinitely easier with regular handling. Baths two to three times a week are another time you'll have to directly handle them.

All these are made easier if you spend just a few minutes every day with your beardie. Pick them up, hold them, pet their head, talk to them. Put them on your shoulder while you watch some TV. Let them crawl around your lap or explore a little.

This type of consistent handling will not only make them more amenable to human contact when it's necessary, but it's also one of the most rewarding parts of being a beardie owner. We love the time we get to spend with all our dragons, relaxing on a shoulder, crawling up an arm, or scampering through our hands.

It's not just good for you, it's good for them. Make sure you are getting daily quality time in with your bearded dragon friend!

## YEARLY VET VISITS

You will hear many beardie owners dismiss this idea, but don't listen to them. Proper veterinary care is an important part of being a responsible pet owner and bearded dragons are no exception.

Beardies are resilient animals. This means that they will not show outward signs of a problem until that problem has progressed to a serious state. They aren't like dogs or cats where we know something is wrong almost immediately.

Your beardie can have a hidden health issue you never see until it's too late. The beardie owners out there who recommend against regular care have simply never experienced one of these issues.

Don't wait until there is a problem, see a qualified herp vet yearly!

## SUPPLEMENTS

In line with proper health care is regular supplementation. Bearded dragons need 3 basic supplements.

First is calcium. This is given in powder form and can be sprinkled or "dusted" on both their greens and their feeder insects. Combined with their UVB light, regular calcium intake keeps their bones strong and healthy. If given alone, calcium can be given to your beardie daily.

Next is vitamin D3. Often given in conjunction with calcium, D3 is what helps make dietary calcium useable.

## A CLEAN HOME

It's weird that some people wouldn't think to keep their pet's home clean, but that's the case for a surprising amount of pet owners.

We've run into more than one person who not only doesn't clean out their beardie's poop daily but makes it more of a weekly chore instead. Their poor bearded dragon is stuck in a hot enclosed space with a week's worth of poop!

Part of keeping a happy and healthy bearded dragon is cleaning up after it regularly. Poop should be picked up as soon as possible. Uneaten greens should be cleared out daily.

Disinfected regularly!

We are choosing to keep a wild animal in a very small space. In their natural habitat, they don't need to worry about things like accumulating faeces. They do it in their enclosure, and it is up to us to make their home clean and habitable.

This isn't just giving them a home they actually like living in; it's also a health issue. Bearded dragons are susceptible to bacteria, parasites, and disease. One of the best ways to prevent all three is to keep their enclosure clean.

In the end, we hope you'll give your beardie all the love and care that they need and deserve. They'll pay you back with years of fun laughs and fascination.

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