

Bearded Dragon Care: The Complete Recovery Standard

1. The Enclosure: Space & Light

Adults **must** have a minimum **4x2x2ft enclosure** (120 gallons). They are semi-arboreal and appreciate vertical climbing space. **UVB Lighting is non-negotiable**; use a high-quality linear UVB tube (T5 HO, 10.0 or 12%) and replace it every 6–12 months. Use tile, slate, or a safe dig-safe mix for flooring; never use calcium sand.

2. Thermal Gradient: The "Sun-Bather"

Basking spot: 100–105°F. Cool side: 75–80°F. Use a thermostat with **all** heat sources to prevent thermal burns. Halogen bulbs are excellent for basking. Keep lights on a 12/12 cycle.

3. Nutrition: The Omnivore Balance

Adults require 70–80% greens (collard, mustard, dandelion, squash) and 20–30% insects (Dubia roaches, crickets, BSFL). **Dust all insects with calcium/D3 powder** to ensure healthy bone growth. Avoid iceberg lettuce—it has no nutritional value.

***THE REALITY CHECK:** Bearded dragons are a 10–15 year commitment. They require high-maintenance, professional-grade lighting and a consistent, nutrient-rich diet. The initial setup cost is significant. If you cannot provide this, please do not adopt.*

4. Health: Recovery Red Flags

- **Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD):** Soft/deformed jaw, bowed limbs, or muscle tremors. Caused by improper UVB/calcium. **This is permanent and painful—prevention is the only cure.**

- **Respiratory Infection:** Labored breathing, open-mouth gaping while not basking, or mucus.
- **Impaction:** Emergency if defecation stops or they drag their back legs.

5. Enrichment & Sustainability

Sustainability tip: Use flat slate rocks or ceramic tiles (found as scrap at hardware stores) to create naturalistic basking ledges that retain heat effectively.

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