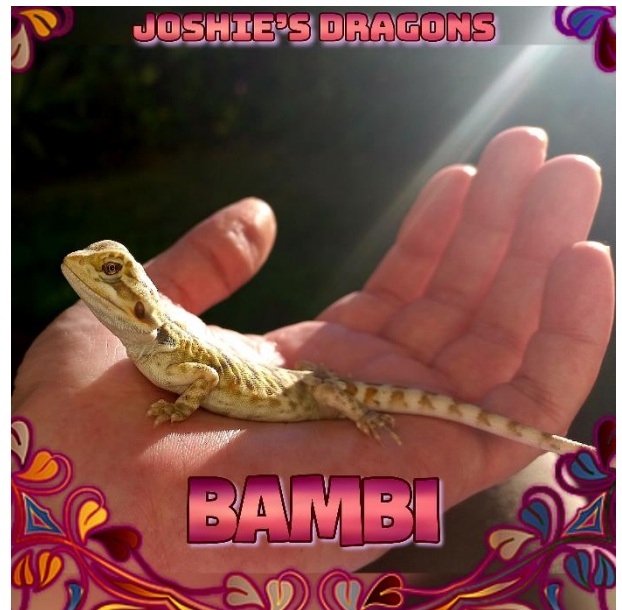


## Let's talk about handling!

If you want to raise a well-mannered bearded dragon that is easy to handle you will need to apply reassurance, routine, and consistency. With my clients, I recommend they begin the bonding process on the first day home.

Let's take a look at your little one's introduction to handling at Joshie's Dragons so far. I begin by stroking, then holding babies within their enclosure at around 3 weeks of age. This is where they feel safe and secure, so it makes sense to use this space to reassure them that you're a safe place too. Once trust is established, I will gradually increase handling time, change environments, and add different activities.



Let's begin with your handling schedule. I recommend you begin with 15 minutes of dedicated training time each day and gradually adjust the time as you go. Sit by the enclosure so you and your dragon can observe each other. Talk to him calmly and use slow, gentle movements. The first few days your focus is to let him see you, feel your touch, hear your voice and to smell and taste your scent. A small piece of your clothing within the enclosure may also help with the bonding process at this time. Calmly interact with your baby as you introduce touch, followed by petting and holding.

- Apply 15 minutes of handling time, within the enclosure each day. Gradually increase your approach as you build up trust and confidence between you.

I find the handling routine is best applied in the late afternoon to early evening as this is when I find the baby will be most compliant. After a few days you will gather the confidence required to move your handling routine to outside of the enclosure.

Find a quiet place in your home to sit and hold your dragon. It's a good idea to have a room free from distractions, loud noises, and other pets. I introduce a soft cloth into the routine at this time. The cloth helps the dragon to feel secure and offer reassurance for you both. A gentle yet firm thumb against the tail of your dragon's tail will ensure you have control if he tries to take off. Please refer to the photographs for handling positions and recommendations. Sit and interact calmly with your dragon.

- Apply 15 minutes of handling time outside of the enclosure, in a quiet room.

Next, you will progress to handling by a front door or entrance way, preferably in the sunshine. This is always a curious time for your dragon so please be vigilant with safety and supervision. Sit and interact with your baby in the sunshine. These steps will gradually reinforce trust and provide the best results.

- Apply 15 minutes of handling time by an entry way or thoroughfare, preferably in the sunshine.

Now we will move handling from inside sunshine to outdoor sunshine. Just be mindful of where you sit, avoiding overhead distractions and loud noises. Please keep in mind, your bearded dragon has a third eye to detect movement from above, so it is important to sit in an area away from birds and other prey. Use your cloth at any stage for reassurance.

- Apply 15 minutes of handling time outside in the sunshine, remembering to keep your dragon safe.

Always remember routine and consistency is key to raising a well-mannered dragon. Now let's break it all down with an easy-to-follow schedule!

✓ Week 1

Apply 15 minutes of handling time, within the enclosure each day.

✓ Week 2

Apply 15 minutes of handling time outside of the enclosure, in a quiet room.

✓ Week 3

Apply 15 minutes of handling time by an entry way or thoroughfare. Sunshine is preferred!

✓ Week 4

Apply 15 minutes of handling time outside in the sunshine.

Confidence, assertiveness, and repetition are all key to avoiding poor behaviours and I've never seen a dragon respond unfavourably to the training tips provided. You now have the tools to begin raising a polite bearded dragon that enjoys being held. Just keep in mind, the more you invest in handling the greater the outcome. Moving forward, this schedule can easily be adjusted to suit your own handling activities and requirements. If you have any questions regarding this information, please feel welcome to get in touch!





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