

# bearded dragon care sheet



Bearded dragons are a type of ancient lizard, originally from the deserts of central Australia. “Bearded” refers to a flap of skin under the chin that they extend when disturbed. They are usually even-tempered and seem to tolerate human interaction.

## facts

average adult size:	up to 24 inches long, half of this being its tail
average life span:	3 to 10 years with proper care
diet:	omnivore

*Will reach adult size in 1 year, under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your reptile grows.*



**Note:** The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

**diet**

A well-balanced bearded dragon diet consists of:

- 70% gut-loaded (recently fed) insects such as crickets, mealworms, roaches and superworms and 30% mixed vegetables and fruit.
- Also benefit from being fed a commercial bearded dragon food.

**feeding**

Things to remember when feeding your bearded dragon:

- Fresh, clean, chlorine-free water should be available at all times.
- Feed daily.
- In general, juveniles will eat more live food; adults are more apt to eat vegetation.
- Sprinkle food with a calcium supplement daily and a multi-vitamin supplement once or twice a week.
- Vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

**housing**

- Size - Appropriately sized and shaped habitat to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise. A 20L tank is a good beginner size for a baby bearded dragon. Upgrade the habitat as your bearded dragon grows.
- Habitat - Provide a hiding area and branches for basking. Maintain less than 50% humidity. Mist as needed.
- Substrate - Calci-sand is recommended. Terrarium carpet is also recommended as an alternative substrate.
- Temperature - Temperature gradient (100°F for the warm end and 70°F for the cool end). Use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source.
- Lighting - UVB rays with full spectrum lighting for 10 to 12 hours a day is required. An incandescent day bulb can be used for basking area during daylight hours only; can use a ceramic heater or nocturnal bulb at all hours.

**normal behavior**

- Tolerates handling and interaction with humans.
- Will spend part of the day in a hiding spot in its habitat.
- Male bearded dragons are territorial and should be housed separately.
- Do not house different reptile species together.

**habitat maintenance**

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week: place bearded dragon in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell; dry the tank and furnishings completely and add clean substrate.

**grooming & hygiene**

- Bearded dragons regularly shed their skin; ensure humidity of habitat is at appropriate level to allow proper shedding. To facilitate shedding, bathe in a large container that allows the bearded dragon to immerse its entire body, or provide a shed box, a hide box with sphagnum moss, that will aid in the shedding process.

**signs of a healthy animal**

- Active and alert
- Clear eyes
- Full tail
- Does not hide for a long time
- Healthy skin
- Droppings are firm, not runny
- Eats regularly

**red flags**

- Weight loss or decreased appetite
- Mucus in mouth or nose
- Swelling
- Lethargy
- Bumps, sores or abrasions on skin
- Labored breathing
- Paralysis of limbs
- Abnormal feces

*If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian.*

**common health issues**

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Gastro-intestinal disease	Runny stools, caked or smeared stool around the vent area and loss of appetite caused by bacterial or parasitic infection.	Consult your veterinarian.
Metabolic bone/vitamin deficiency	Inability to absorb calcium due to insufficient UVB light or improper amounts of calcium/vitamin D. If untreated, can lead to a disorder characterized by deformities, softened bones, swollen limbs and lethargy.	Consult your veterinarian and provide ample UVB lighting and proper calcium/vitamin supplements.
Respiratory disease	Labored breathing and mucus in the mouth or nose. Can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.	Consult your veterinarian and ensure habitat is proper temperature.

## shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized habitat
- Commercial bearded dragon food
- Treats
- Substrate
- Moss
- Food and water dishes
- Mealworms
- Hideaway place
- Climbing décor
- Plants
- Heat light
- Heat fixture
- Under-tank heater (optional)
- UVB lighting and fixture
- Vitamin supplement
- Calcium supplement
- Cricket quencher
- Cricket keeper
- Cricket food
- Thermometer
- Humidity gauge
- Book about bearded dragons

## sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on bearded dragons and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all reptiles are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your reptile or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for reptiles and should consider not having a reptile as a pet.

Go to [cdc.gov/healthypets](https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets) and [petco.com/caresheet](https://www.petco.com/caresheet) for more information about small animals and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the care needs of other species. Go to [petco.com](https://www.petco.com) for more information.

