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Aussie Bearded Dragons as pets

Enclosures: Bearded Dragons as adults, need large habitats. You can either set them up in a small vivarium to begin with or instead purchase a large setup that will be big enough for their adult life. The minimum size for two adult Bearded Dragons should be 920mm long x 350mm wide x 450mm high. However we prefer a size of 1220mm long x 500mm wide x 500mm high, constructed of either glass or a timber/glass combination with plenty of ventilation.

Heating: For proper food digestion and normal body functions, Bearded Dragons need a heat source as they cannot generate their own body heat, in the wild they rely on natural sunlight for this. Bearded Dragons like high temperatures and thrive at a temperature range of 30 to 38 degrees, however a temperature gradient in the enclosure must be provided so that they can regulate their body temperature as they need, from very warm at one end to cool at the other end. Heating devices vary greatly; we use a combination of both reflector globe and a heat rock that is thermo regulated. Both of these devices need to be connected to a thermostat to avoid overheating.

Substrate: Red desert sand is the most used substrate and it looks great! Just remember to keep this as clean as possible and to remove any soiled substrate on a regular basis. Do not use beach sand (can cause digestion and mouth problems) or pelleted cat litter (causes intestinal blockages resulting in death.)

Ultra Violet Lighting: UVA and UVB wavelengths of invisible light are very important for Bearded Dragons, UVA stimulates their natural behaviour and UVB produces vitamin D3 in the skin of the dragon, this vitamin allows the uptake of calcium through the stomach and without inadequate calcium they will suffer from poor bone development causing paralysis and/or death. The most common forms of ultra violet lighting are fluro tubes with a UVB rating of 5 - 10%. These tubes must be placed above the cage within 200mm of your basking Bearded Dragon There should be no glass or plastic between the fluro tube and the Bearded Dragon as this material will filter out the ultra violet lighting. These fluro tubes need to be replaced every 12 months as they lose their effectiveness over time.

Food: Baby Beardies will start eating anything that moves. In captivity we start them on baby crickets, or baby wood roaches dusted in calcium powder 2 to 3 times a day. As they grow increase the size of crickets and roaches appropriately. Once a week in place of the calcium powder use a multi vitamin powder. As they grow they will try other food such as finely chopped salad including celery, broccoli, carrots, lettuce, silverbeet, milk thistle, dandelions, chickweed, sprouted seeds and some other fruits and veges. You will need to experiment a little to find their favourite. Commercial dragon pellets are also a great way to give your dragon a balanced diet. Always supply clean water at all times. A word of warning! Do not feed juvenile bearded dragons mealworms as they can and will cause serious compacting in the digestive system.

Other Important Points of Care: They will love strawberries and raspberries these can be hand feed as treats so your Bearded will love you too. When a Bearded Dragon is shedding it is a good to give him a bath once a day until the shedding is done, the water aids in shedding. Make sure heavy objects are resting on the floor of the vivarium, you don't want to have your dragon crushed if they dig under it! Baby and juvenile dragons can become impacted by eating wood chips, leaf litter, gravel and other substrates that are too large or swell in their digestive system causing death. Beardies love to climb, make sure their tank furnishings are safe and secure remove uneaten crickets from your vivarium. Young dragons can become stressed from excess crickets climbing on them. Never take your beardie outside to sun in a glass tank or vivarium the sun can quickly over heat the enclosure and

become fatal for your pet. Direct sunlight through a house window into the vivarium is not recommended either! Young beardies housed together can sometimes fight and chew on each other this can cause serious injury or death, keep a close eye on them and separate the victim from the bully! Remember that hatchlings and juvenile are more skittish than adults so handling your youngsters at a safe level from the floor will help prevent injuries when he/she unexpectedly decides to make a run for it.

