



Husbandry Handbook

INLAND BEARDED DRAGON

Pogona vitticeps

One of the First

Bearded Dragons are an incredible lizard native to Australia. In their native habitat they experience a wide range of environmental changes like extreme temperatures, dry seasons and wet seasons. Because they are so adaptable, they make hardy and durable beginner reptiles. Bearded Dragons were first brought into captivity in the United States in the 1990s and very quickly became a popular pet. They can now be found in nearly every pet store nationwide. Because they breed quite easily, their numbers increased quickly and now all animals found in the US are captive bred. Over the past few decades specific strains and morphs have emerged and you can now find Bearded Dragons in colors from fire engine red to completely white. They are low maintenance, friendly, and docile. This has made them one of the first and best commonly kept reptiles in the pet trade.

Habitat

Inland Bearded Dragons are native to central Australia. They live in arid woodlands and deserts and spend most of their time in bushes and trees or basking out on rocks. When it is too hot, Bearded Dragons will dig underground to escape the heat and aestivate (go into summer dormancy). When it's too cold they will brumate (go into winter dormancy). The majority of their habitat is dry desert filled with large rocky outcroppings, and very little lush vegetation. During and after the rainy season, vegetation does grow, but it is short lived.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling Bearded Dragons can be housed in a 20L Zilla® Critter Cage® product but adult bearded dragons require a minimum of a 40BR Zilla® Critter Cage® product. Make sure not to put hatchlings into large enclosures as they will have difficulty catching their food which may lead to a stressed pet. Hatchling and adult Bearded Dragons will thrive on a substrate of Zilla® Terrarium Liners or Zilla® Desert Blend. Avoid using substrates made from

reptile bark which will result in an environment that is too humid. Provide a small dish of clean water but also soak your Bearded Dragon in lukewarm water once a week for about 20 minutes. Ensure ample basking and hiding opportunities by providing artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks and/or logs.

Temperature and Lighting

It is important to create a thermal gradient (a warm side and a cool side) in the cage/enclosure. This can be done with an appropriately sized Zilla® Heat Mat adhered to the bottom of the tank on one side. Ideal temperatures for Bearded Dragons range from 75-80°F on the cool side and 85-95°F on the warm side. Provide a 100-110 F basking area on the warm side. Bearded Dragons also require UVB lighting to thrive and be healthy. Using a Zilla® Heat & UVB Fixture with a Zilla® 50W Mini Halogen bulb and a Zilla® Desert Series 50 UVB Bulb will provide the correct heat and UVB needed for your Bearded Dragon. Without UVB, Bearded Dragons can develop Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) resulting in deformations and eventual death. Make sure to place the light over the side with the heat mat to help create that warm side of the thermal gradient. Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces and uneaten food at least twice per week. Every 3 months, remove all substrate in order to clean and disinfect the tank and décor.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, Bearded Dragons are omnivorous meaning they will eat both plant and animal matter. The majority of their diet is insects and small reptiles but can also include small mammals. In captivity, their diet should be mostly insects including crickets, meal worms, superworms, and roaches but a mixture of veggies should still be provided weekly. This mixture should include a wide assortment of chopped up vegetables including carrots, peas, collard greens, dandelion greens, and beans; providing a varied nutritional diet. Another option they enjoy is Zilla® Reptile Munchies Omnivore Mix which contains both insects and vegetables for a full balanced diet. Don't forget to feed Zilla® Gut Load Cricket Drink and Zilla® Gut Load Cricket & Insect Food to your feeder insects for added nutritional value. Make sure to spray their foods with Zilla® Vitamin Supplement and Calcium Supplement sprays.

Handling

As with many reptiles, hatchling and juvenile Bearded Dragons typically tend to initially be more nervous and defensive. Handle your Bearded Dragon gently and deliberately, taking care not to drop or injure the animal. Most adult Bearded Dragons will settle down considerably and become quite docile and personable pets to keep.

Be sure to wash your hands after handling any reptiles.

