

Pet Care of a Bearded Dragon



Bearded dragons are lizards. They are also known as “beardies” and are one of the most popular lizards in captivity in the UK. Their name comes from the spikey folds of skin around their neck, which inflate and turn black when they are excited or need to defend themselves.

They originally come from the dry scrublands of Australia. In captivity, they need their environment to be as similar as possible to their natural surroundings in the wild.

Environment

Bearded dragons must be kept in a large glass enclosure called a vivarium. It needs to be 120cm long and 60cm high, for one dragon. Beardies can grow up to 45cm long and need room to move around and stretch out.

Bearded dragons are ectothermic, therefore they use the environment to control their body temperature. They need a warm end of the vivarium and a cool end so that they can move when they need to change their temperature. They like to lie, or bask, on a natural stone near the heat lamp provided. A thermostat must be installed to make sure the temperature remains constant.

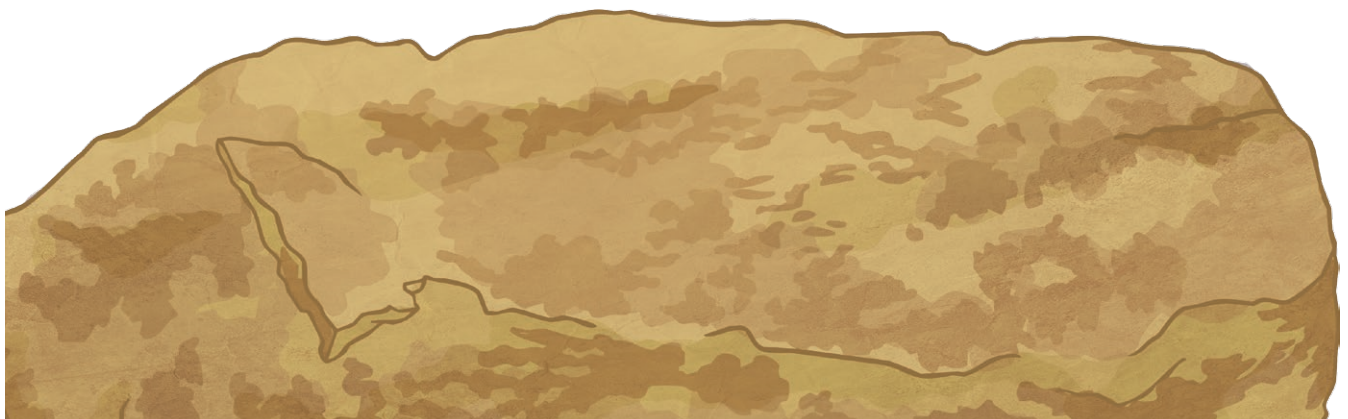
Substrate

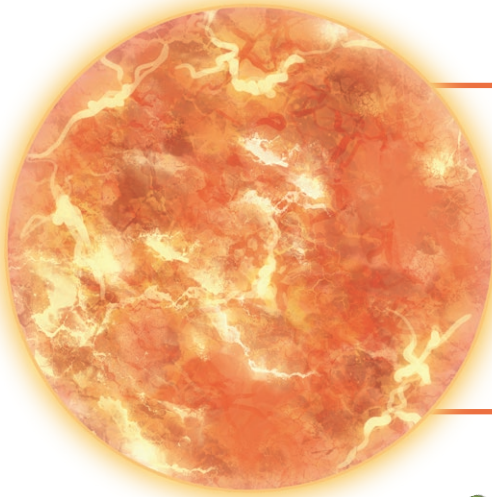
The base of the vivarium needs to be covered with a sand and soil mixture, as bearded dragons have a natural instinct to dig. Stone tiles should have ridges to help the reptile grip.



Did You Know?

Bearded dragons are diurnal which means they are active during the day.





Light

Lizards use the ultraviolet light from the sun to make vitamin D in their skin. This is vital for their skin to make calcium and store it in their bodies. A special UV light must be installed in their vivarium.

Diet

Bearded dragons are omnivorous.

This means they eat live invertebrates - called live foods - and plants, known as greens. Keep live food in a well ventilated container and feed them the same greens as the dragon so that the lizard gets the nutrition through eating the invertebrates.



Safe Greens	Live Food
watercress	
rocket	
cress	crickets
grated butternut squash	locusts
dandelions	calciworms
clover	
plantain leaves	

If bearded dragons have spinach, it affects the dragon's ability to absorb calcium into their bodies.

Feeding Tips

- Take out any uneaten live foods from the vivarium, as they can bite the lizard.
- Cover the live food with supplement powder, to make sure the lizard is getting all the vitamins and minerals it needs.

Two's Company

Bearded dragons are very territorial and will chase other males from their space. Females can fight if they are in groups - they have been known to bite the toes off other lizards and sometimes kill them!

Signs of a healthy lizard:

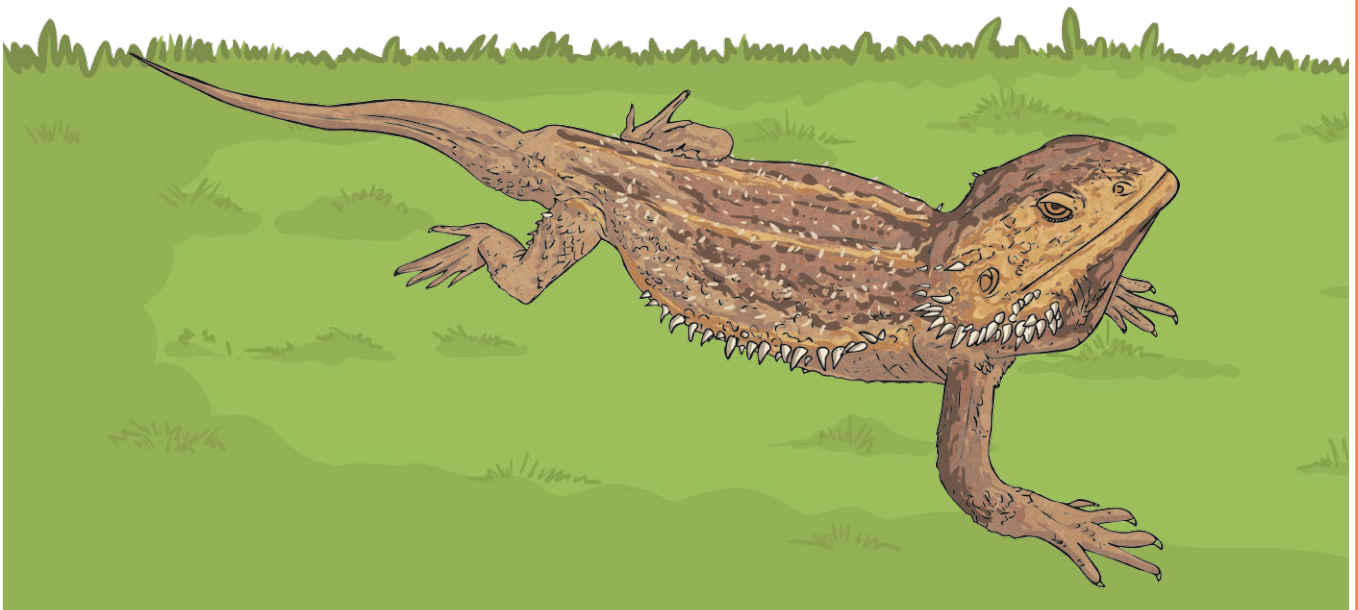
- clear, bright eyes;
- thick base to its tail;
- hips will not be sticking out;
- bright colour after basking.

Signs of calcium deficiency:

- muscle twitching;
- swollen legs;
- fragile bones;
- deformed limbs, spine, jaw.

Sunbathing Lizard

A bearded dragon can be taken outside into the garden on sunny warm days to get natural UV light from the sun. Shade must be available and it must be constantly watched.



Questions

1. Why are bearded dragons called this?

2. Why do bearded dragons need a large vivarium?

3. How do bearded dragons use the environment to control their temperature?

4. Why do they need a soil and sand substrate?

5. What might happen if a UV light isn't fitted to the vivarium?

6. Explain why the live foods are given the same greens the dragon is given.

7. Give three examples of plants which can be fed to a bearded dragon.

8. Why do the uneaten live foods need to be removed from the vivarium?

9. Describe what the outcome might be if more than one female was kept in the vivarium.

10. Would you want to own a bearded dragon? Explain your thoughts.

Answers

1. Why are bearded dragons called this?
Bearded dragons are called this because they have spikey folds of skin around their neck, which inflate and turn black when they are excited or need to defend themselves.
2. Why do bearded dragons need a large vivarium?
Bearded dragons need a large vivarium because they grow to 45cm and like to stretch out and move around.
3. How do bearded dragons use the environment to control their temperature?
Bearded dragons use the environment to control their temperature by moving from a cool place to a warmer place.
4. Why do they need a soil and sand substrate?
They need soil and sand substrate because they have an instinct to dig and these materials are good for them to dig in.
5. What might happen if a UV light isn't fitted to the vivarium?
If a UV light is not fitted to the vivarium, the lizard cannot make vitamin D in its skin which means it cannot store calcium in its body. It can become very ill without calcium.
6. Explain why the live foods are given the same greens the dragon is given.
Live foods are given the same greens as the dragon because then the dragon will get the nutrition of the greens as well as the live food, when they eat it.
7. Give three examples of plants which can be fed to a bearded dragon.
The bearded dragon can be given: watercress, rocket, cress, grated butternut squash, dandelion, clover and plantain leaves. (Accept any three).
8. Why do the uneaten live foods need to be removed from the vivarium?
The uneaten live foods need to be removed from the vivarium because they might bite the bearded dragon.
9. Describe what the outcome might be if more than one female was kept in the vivarium.
If more than one female was kept in the vivarium, they may fight and then they might bite each other's toes off, or even kill one another.
10. Would you want to own a bearded dragon? Explain your thoughts.
Answers will vary.