



## Bearded Dragons

*Pogona vitticeps* and others

An  
Introductory  
Information Leaflet  
from



Europe's Premier  
Reptile Product Company

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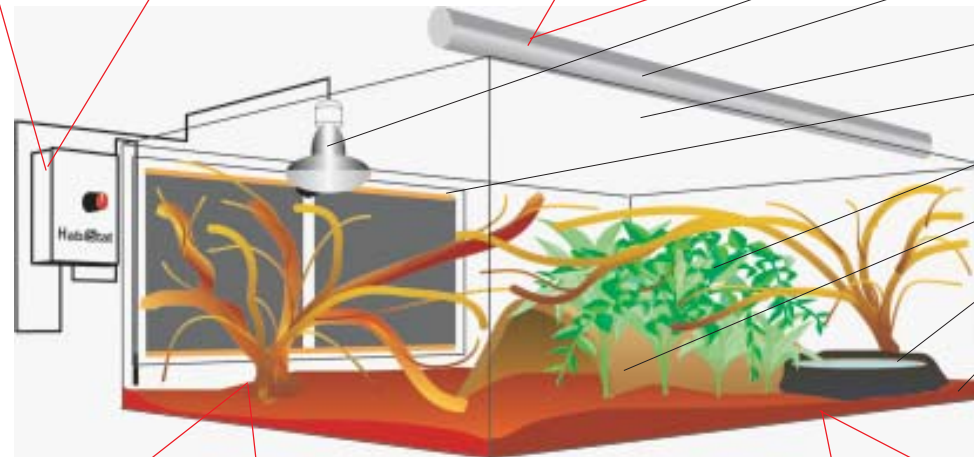
### Background Heat

Use a heat mat between half and two thirds the size of the cage to provide background heating. The hottest spot in the cage should not be above 40°C while the coolest should not be below 27°C. Use a HabiStat Mat - Stat if the temperature is too hot but put the whole cage in a cooler place if the temperature is not cool enough.

**Food:** Crickets, Locusts, Mealworms, and as a special treat Waxworms. Supplement livefoods by dusting insects with *Repton* or feeding *Cricket Diet*. Some individuals may also accept a commercially prepared, pelleted diet and thawed rodent pups. Water should be fresh and changed every day. These lizards may also eat an amount of fresh sweet fruit and leafy salads.

### Ultra Violet Light.

A fluorescent tube that emits UV light is essential for healthy lizards. A full spectrum tube like *Reptile D<sub>3</sub>* could be used as these emit white light as well. The lamps need to be on for about fourteen hours per day in summer and ten in the winter. Between six months and one year is about as long as the lamps will emit sufficient UV light. So they will need periodic changing.



Basking Spotlamp

UV & White Light  
Fluorescent Tube

Ventilated Lid

HabiStat Heat Mat

Repti-Vine

Repti-rock hide

Repti-rock Water Dish

Repti-Sand, Rain Forest,  
or Savannah Substrate

### A Cage Suitable for Bearded Dragons

### Hot Spot

A local area of higher temperature can be created with a spot lamp or a ceramic heater. Use the latter in conjunction with a HabiStat thermostat for precise control. Hot spots should be maintained for the same day length as the lights, sixteen hours in summer, ten in winter.

**Cage Decor:** *Repti-Sand, Savannah or Rain Forest Substrates*, all used bone dry as the cage base. These will blot up and 'clump' any fouling by the lizards. Clumps of waste can be removed without cleaning the whole tank out. *Cork Bark Logs* or climbing branches could be used to make an interesting three dimensional display. Draping *Repti-Vines* in the cage will provide refuges the lizards can hide in or move through to loosen shedding skin. *Repti-rock* caves and water dishes would lend even more functionality and security.

### Cage Set Up

The cage should be set up to allow an active lizard plenty of scope to climb, bask in a hot spot, move to a cooler spot, drink and hunt for food. The lizards should also be able to secrete themselves into refuges and rub themselves against something when shedding their skin.

## Shopping List

Minimum for a juvenile lizard:

- **Vivaria**
- **HabiStat, Heat Mats** 6x11/7w
- **Basking Spot Lamp**
- **HabiStat Dimming Thermostats**
- **UV Lamp**
- **Lamp fixing and lead**
- **Thermometer** Red line
- **Water Dish**
- **Repti-Sand**
- **Repton**
- **Cage Decor**

Other items that may be purchased include those in the following

- list. Not all are required and several alternatives are suggested.
- **HabiStat, Heat Mats** (6x11/7w, 11x11/12w, 17x11/20w, 23x11/28w, 29x11/35w, 35x11/42w & 49x11/55w) & **Strips** (17x6/10w, 23x6/15w, 35x6/22w & 47x6/30w)
  - **Ceramic Heaters** (60w, 100w, 150w, 250w, Reflectors & Holders)
  - **Thermometers** (Redline, Infra red, dial, minimum - maximum & electronic digital)
  - **Hygrometers** (Dial & electronic digital)
  - **HabiStat Thermostats & Accessories** (Mat-Stat 100w, Temperature Thermostat 300w, Twin Channel Thermostat 2x300w, Dimming Thermostat 600w, Pulse Proportional Thermostat 600w, both the last two models are available with a night time temperature drop facility.)
  - **Sun, Moon & Sun & Moon**
  - **Switches, Night Eye, Cool Control Thermostats and MiniFans.**
  - **Repti-rock Dishes Hides & Caves**
  - **Repti-Vines**
  - **Repti-Sand**
  - **Rain Forest Substrate**
  - **Savannah Substrate**
  - **Cork Bark**
  - **Reptile D<sub>3</sub> Lights** (18"/15w & 24"/20w)
  - **Arcadia Control Units** (15w, 2x15w, 18w, 2x18w, 20w & 2x20w)
  - **Frozen Mouse 'Pinkies'**
  - **Frozen Prepared Lizard Diet**
  - **Dried Bearded Dragon Diet**
  - **Crickets** &/or **Locusts** &/or **Mealworms** &/or **Waxworms**
  - **Repton**
  - **Cricket Diet Plus**
  - **Reptasol**
  - **ProBalance**
  - **Vetaclean**
  - **Vetadine**
  - **Vetasept Surgical Scrub**
  - **Vetasept Hand Rub**
  - **Books & Leaflets**



email: info@eurorep.co.uk  
website: www.eurorep.co.uk

## Bearded Dragons...

### ...Biology

Bearded Dragons grow to about 50cm and are stoutish lizards from Australia. The tail is about half the total length. They are modestly coloured and depending on how the mood takes them they can be a shade of grey or buff of anywhere in-between. The animals offered as pets will be captive bred and are usually sold as juveniles. New colours morphs are now being developed, so reds, pastel shades and a few others will feature with these captive bred lizards.

### ...Housing

Bearded Dragons are best housed in as large a cage as possible. Because of their rapid rate of growth and the heating and lighting equipment they need, purpose made vivaria are probably the most appropriate. The types with sliding glass doors to the front being especially resistant to escape.

As a guide the cage should be a minimum 90 cm x 45 cm x 45 cm for a single adult but 120 cm x 45 cm x 45 cm for an adult pair. Of course, the cage could be larger as this would allow the animal room to grow and make it easier for the owner to manage the environment. The cage should be set up in a manner similar to the diagram over leaf. It will be necessary to provide a local hot spot near 40°C, while the coolest part of the cage should be nearer 28°C. The hot spot can easily be arranged by installing a *Basking Spot Lamp*. To ensure the cage does not overheat, the lamp is best controlled with a *HabiStat Dimming Thermostat*. White and UV light, from a lamp like a *Reptile D<sub>3</sub> tube*, may be needed and should be present for a similar period; about sixteen hours per day in summer dropping to eight in winter.

Much of the success achieved in keeping Bearded Dragons will come from the skilful manipulation of ventilation. The lizards require lowish humidity and cannot stand stagnant air conditions. Fresh air moving into the cage is essential. Use the upward draughts caused by heated air rising to flush out the cage and drag fresh air in. A light daily misting with a hand sprayer will provide any humidity required.

### ...Husbandry

Bearded dragons may be kept singly or in groups. Of course the more lizards kept in each cage, the larger the cage should be. Males will tend to fight as they reach maturity and no more than one should be present in the cage. In any case, there should be plenty of retreats and visual screens. Watch out for bullying, particularly among juveniles.

To handle a bearded dragon the whole animal should be gently grasped and held in the hands. One hand beneath, supporting and the other grasping the animal's shoulders, controlling it. These animals are one of the few species of lizard that will tolerate being handle. The tail is easily shed and should not be grasped. Once shed, however, a new tail will grow in time.

In time the cage will begin to look scruffy as faeces and debris builds up. As everything recommended for the cage is washable or disposable, a good clean out is easily done. Eight to ten weeks would be about as long as the cage could be left before being completely cleaned. The cage set up advised in this leaflet is practicable and can be made to look pleasing to the eye. If a more natural set up is envisaged, it may be best to wait until some experience is gained. In any case, some of the very informative books on Lizards in general and Bearded Dragons in particular could be investigated.

## ...Food & Feeding

Insects like crickets and locusts form the staple diet in captivity. Mealworms can also be fed. All insects should be dusted with *Repton*. Alternatively, the insect food can be fed *Cricket Diet* to 'load' the insect with vitamins and minerals. Other insects that are eaten include Waxworms but these are best given only occasionally as a treat. Another occasional meal that may be accepted are the commercially prepared, pelleted diets or a frozen rodent pup that has been thoroughly thawed. With all food it is important to balance the nutrients. These lizards grow very rapidly, so any dietary deficiency will quickly result in deformity. Calcium and the associated vitamin D<sub>3</sub> being particularly important.

Live food is only eaten if it is seen to move and will usually be jumped upon and grabbed with the mouth. One lizard may eat up to ten or more insects at one meal; it will depend upon their size. Feed the lizards every other day with just enough to be completely eaten in fifteen minutes. Try not to leave an excess of uneaten insects in the cage.

In addition to live food a portion of sweet fruit, leafy vegetable and salad can be offered daily.

A small water dish kept full of fresh water should always be available. Misting the cage with a water sprayer is particularly important with juveniles, which seem to prefer water presented this way over the dish method. After misting, allow the cage to dry out fairly rapidly with good air ventilation and convected heat.

### ...Reproduction

Male bearded dragons are proportionately larger than the females and they have broader heads. The throat is very much darker in the mature male and the base of the tail is swollen with the copulatory organs.

A period of courtship proceeds mating and during this time much activity can be expected. Eggs are laid after mating and they may take several weeks to hatch. To grow to adult in captivity may take as short a time as twelve months but in the wild, two to five years may elapse. A cooler winter period will be needed to condition the lizards for breeding in the following season. The lizards available as pets are all captive bred. In their native Australia they are protected but still relatively common

### ...Health & Disease

Bearded dragons live for many years in the wild but seem to live even longer in captivity. They do not suffer from many diseases and veterinary attention is rarely needed. An environment and diet as described in this leaflet will preclude most problems. The most often encountered disease will be a metabolic bone disorder caused by insufficient vitamin D<sub>3</sub> or calcium. Good practice, hygiene and first aid will probably deal with rest. If real disease is discovered, a vet must of course, be consulted. Pet lizards do not pose a real threat to human health. All the normal hygiene precautions regarding humans and animals should, however, be observed.