

To ensure the Bearded dragon is healthy and not experiencing pain daily, visual health checks should be carried out.

Nose

- ✓ Dry
- ✗ Blood or discharge
- ✗ Sneezing or wheezing

Eyes

- ✓ Open and close freely
- ✓ Clear, bright
- ✗ Discharge
- ✗ Unable to open & close freely
- ✗ Cloudy pale – may indicate shedding

Mouth

- ✓ Eating well
- ✓ Aligned teeth
- ✓ Pink gums
- ✗ Thick discharge
- ✗ Reluctant to eat
- ✗ Swollen



Legs, feet, claws

- ✓ Each leg moves correctly
- ✗ Overgrown claws
- ✗ Missing toes

Body/Skin

- ✓ Smooth, glossy scales
- ✗ Rough / missing scales
- ✗ May become dull prior to shedding

Vent

- ✓ Clean and clear
- ✓ Evidence of regular faeces production
- ✗ Blood or discharge
- ✗ Sticky faeces
- ✗ Smelly
- ✗ Swelling



Pet Industry Federation
www.petfederation.co.uk
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www.mypetpeople.co.uk is the website directory of PIF member businesses for pet owners looking for outstanding services for their pet

Looking after your Bearded Dragon



Facts

Bearded dragons can live up to 15 years

Bearded dragons are solitary and can be kept alone

A bearded dragon can grow up to 45cm

Bearded dragons shed their skin in large pieces

To ensure all pet animals are well cared for, the Animal Welfare Act 2006 was introduced.

This law states that all animal owners have a legal duty of care to meet their animal's five welfare needs.

The five welfare needs are:

- The need for a suitable environment
- The need for a suitable diet
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.



The need for a suitable environment

Providing the bearded dragon with safe, suitable accommodation which is clean, comfortable, secure and has appropriate environmental conditions, including temperature, humidity, ventilation and drainage.

A large vivarium with a plastic base is ideal. The vivarium should be at least 120cm x 60cm x 60cm to provide enough space for the bearded dragon to move around. Bearded dragons benefit from having natural hides within their enclosure as well as an area to bask in and branches or rocks to climb on.

The vivarium should contain a suitable floor covering (substrate) such as specialist reptile sand or reptile carpet. Swallowing the substrate can be dangerous for a bearded dragon so care must be taken to choose an appropriate substrate.

Additional UVB lighting is essential for a bearded dragon to allow them to produce vitamin D3, preventing the development of metabolic bone disease.

Like all reptiles, bearded dragons are cold blooded and require a heat source within their accommodation. Protected heat lamps or heat mats can be used and should be placed at one end of the enclosure to ensure a temperature gradient within the vivarium, with ideal daytime temperatures around 24°C at the cool end and 40 °C at the warm end of the vivarium. If the temperature gets too low the bearded dragon may go into type of hibernation known as brumation.

Bearded dragons should be provided with a shallow water bath so they can bath themselves to cool off or to help them shed their skin. The humidity of the enclosure should be around 35%

The need for a suitable diet

Bearded dragons are omnivores and eat small pieces of green leafy vegetables as well as small insects like crickets or mealworms.

Their food should be dusted in a supplement to a balanced diet is provided. Bearded dragons should be fed every day.

Fresh water must always be available.



The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

Bearded dragons can be quite active animals and like to climb around their enclosure.

Provide a range of enrichment objects as well as an area for the bearded dragon to bask.

Bearded dragons shed their skin when growing and may bathe or rub against objects in the enclosure to aid the shedding process.

he need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

Bearded dragons are territorial animals and males should be kept individually to prevent fighting.

Females can be kept together providing the enclosure is large enough but should be monitored for signs of fighting.

The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

By providing a suitable diet, correct lighting, temperatures and clean accommodation the bearded dragon will be less likely to develop some diseases and disorders.

To ensure bearded dragons do not experience pain when being handled they should be handled correctly. The bearded dragon should be scooped up and its body supported. Poor handling may result in the bearded dragon dropping its tail.

Should the bearded dragon become ill providing suitable care and where necessary veterinary treatment is essential. Some common conditions are:

- **Metabolic bone disease** – due to a lack of vitamin D3 the bearded dragon cannot absorb calcium and develops weak bones and muscles
- **Mouth rot** – symptoms include thick puss around the mouth, presence of blood, swollen mouth
- **Impaction**– if the bearded dragon swallows some of the substrate their intestines can become blocked, making it difficult for them to go to the toilet.