

## Bearded dragon



Adequate temperature		
	Hot spot	Cold spot
Day temperature	35 °C	32 °C
Night temperature	25 °C	22 °C

### Main Features :

The bearded dragon is a desert lizard increasingly popular with reptiles. The main reason is that it is relatively robust and easy to keep in captivity. Moreover, he is quite calm and he rarely has a tendency to bite or gratify. He is active during the morning and at the end of the day, because in nature it is at these times that he looks for his food. The rest of the time, he takes the opportunity to hide or to bask in the sun. Generally, bearded dragons are brownish in color with paler bands on the sides. On the other hand, there are varieties that can go from yellow to orange. The scales in the throat are thorny and the skin is easily extensible in this area, giving the appearance of a beard. This reptile has a life expectancy of 8 to 12 years if it has good conditions of captivity and good care. The male can be differentiated from the female by the following features: triangular head and proportionately larger in the male, presence of large femoral and pre-anal pores in males and presence of a bulge under the tail (hemipenis).

### Captivity:

The habitat of the bearded dragon must measure at least 120 cm x 45 cm x 45 cm and be equipped with a heating system and a lighting system emitting ultraviolet rays. Adding a shallow pond is highly recommended or necessary for your pet to cool off. The bearded dragon likes to bask on branches or rocks to get closer to the source of heat. It is therefore necessary to provide him with a solid branch and wide enough where he can climb at his ease. Two hiding places, one in the hot spot and the other in the cold spot, allow him to hide from the direct light when he feels the need. Humidity (40%) and temperature (see chart above) should be carefully monitored to maintain the health of your bearded dragon. To maintain the proper temperature, the use of a heating mat, out of reach of the animal, can be used as well as a heat lamp not accessible for the latter. The carpet must be installed under the terrarium to avoid any direct contact. If the animal has access to the heating source, the risk of burns is close to 100%. A reptile does not feel the heat on its skin, it is only once it is too late that it feels the injury. The bearded dragon must have a UVA-UVB lamp in its habitat! This lamp is essential to his good health because it provides a source of calcium that is normally provided by the sun during his tanning sessions. This lamp should work 10-12h per day and be changed every 6 months to maintain its effectiveness! At night this lamp should be off, unlike the heat lamp that must work all day. In order to better control the time of exposure to UVA-UVB light and to maintain an adequate temperature and the right degree of humidity, it is strongly recommended to obtain a timer, a thermometer and a hygrometer to better control the variants. The ideal is to get a thermostat that will regulate the temperature itself, but it is important to make sure that it always works, even after several years! For the substrate (bottom mat), a grass mat may be ideal as an option as it is easy to clean. It is good to have 2-3, alternating times in time to make a better cleaning of the carpet. A

gravel or sand substrate is not recommended due to the risk of the animal ingesting this product, which can cause intestinal blockage. However, if you put sand in the habitat, you must feed your dragon out of its habitat, so that it does not ingest the substrate and avoid a visit to the veterinarian.

### **Food:**

The bearded dragon is an omnivorous reptile, that is to say that it must eat both vegetables and insects. Depending on the age of the latter, the nutritional needs will change. In a juvenile dragon, small crickets should be offered 2-3 times a day and a small amount of green leafy vegetables (kale, lettuce, etc.) and other vegetables (corn, carrots, beans and peas) finely chopped every 2 days. In the adult dragon it is recommended to offer adult crickets, mealworms and goliath worms, silkworms, butterworms (see worms) every day or every other day. Plants must represent 80% of its diet once adult and insects 20%. It is also possible to give him newborn mice once a week to diversify his diet. It is important to ensure that the crickets offered are fed before being given to the bearded dragon. Do not forget to give water to the crickets so that they don't die before being given to the lizard. Adding a piece of wet sponge or a piece of potato to the cricket bowl is just fine.



### **Frequent health problems:**

- **Metabolic Bone Disease:** The lizard may suffer from anorexia, tremors, swelling around the bones, lethargy, or bone malformations caused by old fractures.
- **Infections:** Infections can occur in the mouth (stomatitis), on the skin (bacterial or fungal) or in the form of abscess. This condition is often the cause of poor nutrition, excess moisture or poor hygiene.
- **Parasites:** A lizard can sometimes catch parasites in many ways, such as having been outside, being in a boarding house or pet store or coming from their live food (mice, insects, etc.). If the animal is not treated following the appearance of parasites, it could become anemic and die. Parasites feed on your pet's blood, where they can find the nutrients they need for survival.
- **Moult problem:** A reptile moults several times a year. The moult consists of a change of skin. The animal grows up and the scales become too tight on it. He develops new scales and the old ones have to leave. A moult problem occurs when the degree of humidity is not adequate. If your pet has difficulty moulting, do not pull on the molt. Give it a bath of lukewarm water instead.
- **Cloacal Prolapse:** A cloacal prolapse is an externalization of part of the digestive system of your reptile. It is therefore possible to see part of the intestine of your reptile out its cloaca (opening that joins the anus and the reproductive system).

As with all animals, it is recommended to perform an examination after purchasing a new reptile. An annual checkup helps prevent any health problems that may occur and thus save the life of your pet. If in doubt, a visit to the veterinarian is required! A reptile, whatever it is, will hide its symptoms so as not to become an easy prey for predators (humans). At the slightest change in behavior, contact your veterinarian

