



Feeding

Hatchlings - 8wks old: A mixture of greens is given every morning on a shallow dish which allows babies easy access, we like to use dandelion, rocket, kale, endive, chicory and watercress. Chop the greens very finely to begin with and then as your babies get older you can adjust the size of the greens in accordance with the size of the dragon. We feed crickets approx. 5mm, well dusted with Nutrobal, 3 x daily. They should be allowed as many crickets as they can eat in a 10 minute period.

The last feed should be at least two hours before the lights go off. At the end of the day all food is removed...every last cricket, once the lights are off dragons become completely inactive and the crickets will not only annoy them but will bite babies while they are asleep.

Never feed a dragons prey that is too large! Food items that are too large for your dragon can cause serious problems and even lead to death. A rule of thumb is never feed anything bigger than the space between the dragons eyes

We water all hatchlings once a day with an eye dropper filled with bottled water. Babies can become dehydrated rapidly, especially since they do not tend to eat as many veggies as older beardies. Place a few drops on the tip of the dragons mouth and it will start to drink, only give as much as the dragon wants.

We give all our dragons, babies and adults, a bath in a shallow pan of water 2x per week. The dragons seem to really enjoy this and will quite often have a drink of their bath water. Make sure the water is warm. This helps the dragons to rehydrate and makes shedding much easier. Never leave your dragon unattended during its bath.

8wks - 14 wks: Same mixture of greens as above chopped slightly coarser. The cricket size is adjusted in relation to the size of the dragon. Water every two days.

14wks - 6mo: Same mixture of greens as above. Adjust the cricket size as your dragon grows (please do not forget to dust your crickets as this is a time where your dragon grows extremely quickly and needs lots of calcium). We now feed only 2x per day but as a treat you can add appropriately sized locusts....be careful they love these and they are very expensive....and the occasional waxworm.....not too many as they are very fattening.

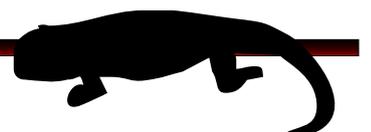
6mo-1yr: Same mixture of greens as above but on some days we add grated carrot, sweet potato, or butternut squash. As an occasional treat you can give fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, kiwi or grated apple. The insect feed is given only once a day and should consist of crickets, locusts, mealworms, and occasionally a few waxworms. We water them every third day.

It is not unusual for a dragon, at some point during this time, not to feed quite as ferociously as it has done, this is quite normal and nothing to worry about as long as they do not go off their food for days.

While bearded dragons are by nature a plump lizard and should not be skinny overfeeding to the point of fat is unhealthy and can cause liver problems.

In order for crickets to be nutritious for you dragon it is necessary to gut load them. We feed our crickets a mixture of lettuce, carrot slices, fish food (high in protein) and a high calcium ready made bug diet (bug-grub) available in most pet shops that deal in reptiles.

Wherever possible we use only organic vegetables and fruit. If you pick your own dandelion greens do make sure that no pesticides or weed killers have been used in the area.





Housing

We house juvenile bearded dragons in 90x28x28cm white melamine tanks with sliding glass fronts, we find this a good starting size as it is not too large for young dragons to find their prey but large enough to give a good temperature gradient. The tanks are fitted with a 40w bulb at the basking site and a 10.0 Repti-Sun UVB bulb that runs the length of the tank. It is important to light the tank evenly as light stimulates your dragons appetite. The basking area should be at one end of the tank with a temperature of approx. 38C and the cool side of the tank should have a temperature of about 27-28C. This temperature gradient allows your

dragon to choose throughout the day where it feels most comfortable. It is as easy for a dragon to overheat as it is for it to become too cool and not digest properly, it is up to you to give him the means to regulate its body temp.

As your dragon grows it will need a larger enclosure. We use tanks that are 130x60x60cm for a single adult or up to three females. Again we make sure that the UVB bulb runs the length of the tank. The wattage of the basking bulb may have to be changed depending on how warm or cool your house is. Use a thermometer at the basking site and another one at the cooler end of the tank to obtain exact readings.

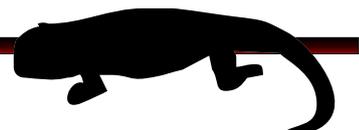
We use paper towels as a substrate for hatchlings until they are about 8 weeks old, we find this the safest and easiest for the babies. Crickets are very easily spotted and there is no chance of impactation. We change the paper towels every evening before the lights go off so it is also very hygienic. For older beardies we use either Nambia Terra terrarium sand, oat bran, or wheat bran (a great tip from Vickie and Rob). The bran is very safe, absorbent, and has a pleasant smell. All faecal sample is removed immediately....you may have to do this a few times a day. Tanks are cleaned completely every one -two weeks with a 1 part bleach to 40 parts water, rinsed well and then rebedded. All cage furniture must also be cleaned. In nature a bearded dragon has the opportunity to walk away from his mess....no animal likes to be kept in soiled conditions.

Cage furniture should be kept to a minimum for baby dragons, a java wood branch or a rock at the basking site, their veggie bowl, and maybe another rock or branch at the cooler end. Babies find their prey much easier in an uncomplicated setup and it gives the crickets little opportunity to hide. As your dragon becomes older feel free to make a more interesting habitat. We never use heat rocks as they can cause severe burns.

Dragons that cohabitate together must be of the same size, never put a baby dragon in with an adult or even a sub adult...they will make no distinction between the baby dragon and prey. If you are keeping two or more babies together it is not unusual for them not to grow at the same pace, if this happens you must separate them to give the smaller dragon a chance....bullying even if it is psychological will cause the smaller dragon to stop feeding. You can never keep two adult males in one enclosure, they are very territorial and will fight, which can lead to serious injury.

We keep lights on for about 12-14 hours per day, and use a timer to make sure that times we have set remain consistent. The night time temperature drop can go as low as 20C, this is important for your dragons health.

We randomly have our vet do faecal examinations for parasites. Although a healthy dragon is able to deal with most parasites any kind of stress situation can cause a serious parasitic infection. A new home or tank, adding cage mates incorrect handling, too high temps., to low temps, etc. all can cause stress. Please do try to find a vet who is qualified in exotics as an inexperienced vet can do more





When a dragon (especially a baby) arrives in its new home it will most likely be stressed and frightened and not feed especially well the first day or two. This is quite normal and as long as this period is only very temporary nothing to worry about, however if it continues for longer than 24-48 hours do please notify us immediately. There are several things you can do to make the adjustment for your dragon easier, please do not handle....as exciting as your new pet may be....the dragon overly much in the first few days, this will only cause it to become more stressed.

Until now your dragon has been in a tank with at least seven other clutch mates in a calm and quite environment and handling has been kept to a minimum,it is a big change for a little dragon. Another indication that your dragon is stressed is its colour, when a coloured dragon loses its vivid colour and becomes quite dark it is usually a sign that it is not happy, dark markings and spots on its belly is a clear indication of this. Within a week or two these should fade and the dragon's belly will return to its white colour. Try to keep your dragon in a relatively quiet place to begin with and give it time to feel safe and adjust to its new home.

If for any reason you are worried about your dragon ie...not feeding, extremely dark for prolonged periods of time, laying flat on the ground rather than basking or any other behaviour that seems strange to you please get in touch with us and we will do our best to rectify the problem. It is easier to correct a problem that is in its infancy rather than one that has been ongoing for some time so do not hesitate to call us.

Having said all this it is the exception rather than the rule, most baby dragons will be feeding ferociously within a short time and curiously checking out its new environment.

