



The Central Bearded Dragon

Natural distribution



This species is native to the central and more arid areas of eastern and southern Australia

Physical and behavioural characteristics

- grow to a total length of around 50cm
- long lived (8-10 years)
- males are usually larger than females with proportionately larger heads and a thicker tail base.
- males are usually more intensively coloured than females
- diurnal (active during the day)
- upright stature and covered in small, rough scales
- “beard” displayed when alarmed
- like to get off the ground and are often seen perched on fence post, logs and rocks.

Environmental requirements for keeping in captivity

- require a reasonably large enclosure
- require an ultraviolet (UV) light source, heating and suitable basking sites
- enclosure must have a range of temperatures from around 20°C to 40°C during the day
- bark, leaf litter, shredded paper or purpose-made substrates must cover the floor of the enclosure some branches and rocks must be provided for them to climb on.

Feeding and nutrition

Base diet

- hatchlings are mostly insectivorous and need to be fed a range of live insects (crickets, mealworms, cockroaches) as well as a finely chopped vegetable diet for the first few months
- adults are omnivorous and require a range of finely chopped vegetables, which should be offered at each feed. These should be offered three times each week
- a powdered calcium supplement should be added to each meal and a multi-vitamin supplement (such as Herptevite) added once each week
- feed should be placed into the enclosure around mid morning and any leftovers removed after 3-4 hours
- fresh water must be available at all times.

Enhancements

- soaked dry dog kibble can be added to the vegetable mix once each week
- live insects such as crickets, mealworms and cockroaches can also be offered weekly
- a small amount of canned cat food (non fish varieties), around 20% by weight, can be mixed into the vegetables once each week.

Considerations when keeping Bearded Dragons in schools

- readily available and relatively inexpensive to purchase (\$20-\$50)
- very amenable to handling once conditioned
- individual “personalities” often observed
- most active during the day
- must have direct exposure (not through glass) to a good quality ultraviolet light for 7-8 hours each day. The UV globes must be replaced annually and cost from approximately \$80 to around \$120.

References

<http://www.australianbeardies.net/forum/showthread.php?397-Central-Bearded-Dragon-Care-Sheet>

<http://www.burkesbackyard.com.au/factsheets/Others/Bearded-Dragons/364>

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Central-Bearded-Dragon>

Green, D. and Larson, T. (2001) *Keeping bearded dragons*. Australian Reptile Keeper Publications, Bendigo.
www.reptilepublications.com.au