



Video transcript

Bearded dragon housing

So, this particular enclosure here at Taronga Zoo, it's a rather large one. It's a two metre enclosure. It has three adult Bearded Dragons in it and it's ideal, it's better than ideal, it's got everything a dragon could ever want. It has a nice substrate on the floor which animals can hide in. It has a permanent water bowl there so there's always a drink of water if it needs it. But it's got a lot of structural height. This particular species likes to climb around in low foliage, gets off the ground, likes to look out and around at potential food and mates during the mating season. And so we have lots of branches. In the wild these guys like to be very warm during the day you'll see them out basking in the sun and the reason for that is so they can get their body temperature up to about thirty five degrees Celsius which is really warm. You pick them up and they feel really hot if they've been basking. To simulate that in captivity we have this area down here called the hot spot. So, there's a strong heat globe just above the roof there. This area gets to well into the low forty degree Celsius. So, it's really very warm and the lizard can sit there if it wants to and get as warm as it likes and then it can move away. Because this is an indoor enclosure and so the rest of the enclosure is pretty close to room temperature. So, it can get as hot as it likes but then it can choose what temperature it wants to be at by moving in and out of that hot spot. It's really important especially again for Dragon Lizards, as we call them in Australia. We have a bit of foliage in there. They like to climb. They sleep at night off the ground normally. They like to climb up and sleep in that foliage. You'd be surprised how hard they are to see. They're pretty well camouflaged, on my hand not so much but in the wild they can hide very, very well in just a bit of bush or underground. Another aspect of this enclosure is the thick substrate and there's a rock there. So, it's good. Reptiles don't like to be visible all the time. Most reptiles they like to hide away when they're not out foraging, feeding or sunbaking they like to hide away so they can't be seen in the wild by predators. So, this enclosure is perfect, they can get under this large rock and they can actually shuffle down into the substrate here. And I don't know if you can see it but under that log there's the third lizard in this enclosure and he hasn't even come out today yet, he's leading the lazy life I think. But he's hiding down there, his head's out and he's looking at us but at night he would shuffle down under that substrate and disappear. So, that's probably where he's been sleeping last night. So, this is the hot end of the enclosure like I said it's really warm here and you can see this guy's sitting here soaking up the heat. But what you can't see up here in the roof of this particular enclosure there's a red lamp which is producing all that heat I can feel but also there's a very special ultra violet lamp. And what this does it acts like sunlight. These lizards, they're a little unusual compared to most other reptiles or many other reptiles in that they need direct sunlight to function properly. And that is that it's the UV part of the sun's rays. And when they're outdoors sitting in the sun they get more than they need of that. But here indoors there's absolutely none of that good quality UV light here. So, what we do we have to buy a very special lamp and they're not cheap, they're quite expensive, UVB lamp and they're specifically for reptiles, indoor reptile cages. You can get them in pet shops or online from suppliers. And there's one of those up there and it's on a timer, it's on for about eight or nine hours a day with the heat lamps. They're only on to replicate the sunlight outdoors and without that you're lizard will have lots of serious health problems. They'll be slow to happen but they will happen. And the main problem is called Metabolic Bone disease and that's a lack of calcium being metabolised in the bone. It doesn't matter how much calcium you give them, they do need this ultraviolet B light to be able to use that calcium to build strong bones and healthy muscles. So, it's extremely important that these lizards have access to this UV light. If you're enclosure was outdoors that would be different and it had a wire lid or something. But you have to remember the UVB rays that are important for lizards they don't go

through glass. So, it's really important to know that they don't go through wire mesh of course so it has to be direct sunlight and not through glass because glass cuts out that particular wave length completely. So, yeah like I say up there, there's the two lamps, one for heat and one for UV light. And these fellows will sit there several hours a day. So, this is a fairly large enclosure but of course like any animal enclosure it has to be kept clean. We do what we call spot cleaning. Several times a week we would go around and we'd pick up any faecal matter that you'll see on top of the surface and that's removed with a big lump of substrate and thrown away and then regularly depending on how many lizards and what time of year and how much they're eating. And we would remove all these logs and take them outside and hose them or scrub them, give them a really good hose outside or even replace them, get a new log as required. So, it has to be done fairly regularly and as required we do it depending on how many lizards are in there.