

Bearded Dragon Profile: In-Depth

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the BEARDED DRAGON

Some lizards could be mistaken for plastic statues: brilliantly colored, attractive to look at, but with the personality of, well, a plastic statue. Not so the Bearded Dragon, a mid-size lizard, comprised of seven species, all native to arid regions of Australia.

The rich, earth-tone coloration of the Bearded Dragon is, by lizard standards, beautiful. Their namesake feature, the beard, is comprised of folds of flexible skin and scales. Though fearsome looking with beard puffed out, the Bearded Dragon is actually gentle-spirited. In addition to his unique and dramatic appearance, there are several more reasons he is a much sought after pet.

Social Skills - Unlike some lizards which prefer to be left alone, the Bearded Dragon adapts well to humans. He actually seems to enjoy human company. In fact, daily handling is recommended to maintain his trust and attention.

Bearded Dragons have many interesting social skills, for example:

- Beard display, puffing out of the beard, is thought to be a display of dominance. It is also used in courtship.
- Head bobbing is another display of dominance. Submissive Dragons are sometimes observed in a slow bow in response to the bobbing.
- Bearded Dragons will lift and wave their arms to acknowledge one another or in response to bobbing.
- A raised tail also signifies assertiveness.

Animated Behaviors - In the wild, the Bearded Dragon is an adept climber. A diurnal animal, he is active morning and afternoon, frequently seen basking on rocks, or clinging to [branches](#) and fence posts in all positions - horizontal, vertical and in between. As a pet, he retains his innate curiosity about his surroundings and likes to explore. To warm himself, he will flatten his belly out on a flat rock or branch in the sun. To help remove loose skin, he may rub himself against any available surface.

Easy Care and Feeding - The habitat of the Bearded Dragon is easy to set up and maintain. With the exception of droppings, he is odor free, and [daily cleaning](#) will keep the habitat pleasant. A hearty lizard, he will have few medical problems if provided the right diet and environment.

The Bearded Dragon will eat most any insect, but the insect should be proportional to the lizard's body size. [Live crickets](#) are a favorite, but use the pinhead crickets for juveniles. For Bearded Dragons, it is very important that the size of food be proportional to the size of the animal. Malnourishment, seizures, and intestinal blockages can occur if hatchlings and juveniles are fed insects that are too large for them to capture or digest. Under no circumstances can the Bearded Dragon be fed



fireflies, which are fatally poisonous. Starting at 1-2 months of age, in addition to insects, his diet should include 20% fresh and frozen vegetables, including collard greens, mustard greens, red leaf lettuce, carrots, green squash, green peas, dandelions, blueberries, green beans, and more. He can be trained to hand feed.

Are You Ready to Pick Out Your Dragon?

You should set up the habitat before you bring your new Dragon home. See [Habitat Checklist: Bearded Dragon](#) for set-up tips. And check out [Bearded Dragon: Stats and Facts](#) at our PetEducation.com site.

When visiting a pet shop, look for a Dragon that is active. Don't pick a small lizard. Handle him. He should relax in your hand without digging in. Make sure he is well-proportioned and fully formed. Check for five toes on four feet, clear nostrils, and a full tail.

Hatchlings start at 4-5 inches in length, and grow to 12 inches in about 13 weeks. Full grown, they average 18-20 inches, and can grow to two feet. With good care, a healthy Dragon can live up to ten years. If you are ready for a long-term commitment, you will likely find the Bearded Dragon to be a wonderful pet.