

What Can I Feed my Bearded Dragon?

Bearded Dragons are omnivores. Your Bearded Dragon's diet should consist of vegetables, insects, and the odd bit of fruit. Providing your dragon with a water dish is optional.

When your bearded dragon is a baby/junvenile he/she should be fed a diet of around 80% bugs and 20% plants. When your bearded dragon reaches adult age his/her diet should flip to around 80% plants and 20% bugs. Bearded Dragons can have small amounts of fruit as a treat every once and a while.

Baby/Juvenile Bearded Dragon's vegetables should be cut up into small pieces for eating to prevent choking. The bugs should also be small; such as baby crickets, not adult crickets. A guideline is to aim for their food to be no longer than the width between your bearded dragon's eyes looking at the top of their head from a bird's eye view.

Vegetables Bearded Dragons can eat:

- Butternut squash
- Cabbage (Raw)
- Celery
- Chicory
- Collard greens
- Cucumber (Peeled)
- Lentils (Cooked)
- Endive
- Carrots (*Chop up well or give the peelings to your dragon*)
- Broccoli (*Only feed your dragon broccoli occasionally*)
- Lettuce (*Does not contain much nutritional value so should not be the only vegetable fed to your dragon*)
- Okra (Raw)
- Parsnips
- Pumpkins
- Radicchio
- Spaghetti squash
- Turnip greens
- Yams (Raw)
- Zucchini (Raw)
- Yellow squash
- Kale
- Kohlrabi
- Mustard greens
- Dandelion
- Acorn squash
- Artichoke Heart
- Asparagus (Raw)
- Bell Peppers (Raw)
- Bok choy



Bearded Dragons love Dandelions and they are very beneficial for your bearded dragon to eat!

Fruits Bearded Dragons can eat (Occasionally):

- Apples
- Apricots
- Banana
- Blackberries
- Kiwi
- Papaya
- Blueberries
- Cherries
- Cranberries
- Figs
- Grapes
- Melons
- Peaches
- Pears
- Pineapple
- Plum
- Prunes
- Raisins
- Strawberries
- Watermelon



Bugs Bearded Dragons can eat:



- **Crickets** (Feed young bearded dragons small crickets and adults large crickets)
- **Superworms** (For adult Bearded Dragons only)
- **Mealworms** (These are often not recommended due to their hard chitin shell which are difficult for bearded dragons to digest, but can be fed to your Bearded Dragon every once and a while). Feeding mealworms to babies is not recommended.
- **Wax worms** (Have high fat content so should only be fed as a treat every once and a while)
- **Butterworms** (Also have high fat content and should be fed as a treat)
- **Dubia Roaches** (Very good protein source, have soft shells so small roaches can be fed to baby Bearded Dragons and large ones to Adult Bearded Dragons, not legal in Canada though.)
- **Earthworms** (Also have high fat content so should be fed as treat). Bugs from outside can pose a risk of carrying parasites.
- **Pinky mice** Fully grown adult Bearded Dragons can eat these as a treat. (I would suggest only feeding pinky mice max a couple times a year)

Foods to AVOID:

- Tulip
- Poinsettia
- Buttercup
- Hydrangea
- Water Hemlock
- Ivy
- Wild Daffodil
- Iceberg Lettuce
- Corn
- Spinach
- Fireflys
- Avocado
- Elderberry

What should my Care Routine look like?

Vegetables and Protein:

I suggest providing your Bearded Dragon with **fresh vegetables in the morning** to snack on throughout the day. If you also choose to feed your beardie juvenile food pellets, soak those in water and sprinkle them on top of the salad, it is also good to sprinkle a little calcium powder on top of the salad. You can also choose to add in some fruit to your beardie's salad every once and a while.

It is ideal to spread out feeding your baby bearded dragon their **protein (Bugs) 2 times a day**. A good routine would be to feed your beardie their salad in the morning, some protein in the afternoon, and then more protein in the evening. If due to your schedule you are only able to feed your dragon their protein once a day that is ok.

When your beardie reaches around eight months old you can cut down to feeding him/her once a day.

The amount your bearded dragon eats a day depends on his/her size and age. With a baby, I would suggest starting off with trying to feed him/her around 7-12 baby/small crickets (Or 6-8 Phoenix worms) a day (4-6 crickets 2 times a day) and then slowly add 1 more cricket a day to see how much of an appetite your beardie has. You may find your beardie can easily eat 20 small crickets a day! Some bearded dragons will keep eating until you stop giving them more, so use your judgment and make sure to not overload your bearded dragon with too much protein in a day as your beardie could end up being overweight and have liver and kidney problems. Also, if your dragon is overeating bugs, he/she will not eat his/her vegetables.

When your beardie gets a bit older you can switch to feeding him/her large crickets/bugs, but do not start feeding your beardie super worms until they are at least 1 year old.

Water:

It is a good idea to provide your bearded dragon with a small **water dish** in his/her enclosure. The dish should be filled with fresh water every day, you may find your beardie likes to sit and soak in the water.

In the wild bearded dragons normally get their hydration they need by drinking the dew off of leaves and surfaces in the morning. Therefore you should **mist your bearded dragon every day** or multiple times a day (Get a simple spray bottle and fill it with water) to help your beardie stay hydrated, you will notice he/she will start licking the drops of water off of surfaces. You may find your bearded dragon never drinks from his/her water dish.

Do not let the humidity in your beardie's enclosure to be regularly high as this can cause respiratory problems. The humidity level should be around 35%-40%, no higher than that. A temporary spike in humidity while misting is fine.

It is also good to give your beardie a bath at least once a week, this will help ensure your beardie stays hydrated, clean, and it also helps your beardie when he/she is shedding. To do this, fill a container, your sink, or your bathtub with a little bit of warm water (Shallow enough so that your beardie can still touch the bottom) and place your beardie in. When your beardie gets older you may find it helpful to gently scrub him/her down with an old toothbrush.

Cleaning:

Feces should be removed from the cage daily but I also suggest once every 1-2 weeks doing a thorough cleaning of the enclosure. What I usually do is remove all logs, rocks, and items in the enclosure, place them in the sink or bathtub, spray them down with a disinfectant and scrub them down with hot soapy water. Then I spray the inside of the enclosure with disinfectant (I use Dexitent 4 Detergent heavily diluted in a spray bottle) and then wipe out the inside of the cage with a wet cloth or paper towel (making sure no residue is left). After this I put everything back in the enclosure including a clean carpet, vinyl flooring mat, or new paper towel in the bottom. If you have sand in your adult dragon's enclosure it should be replaced every 3-5 months. If you prefer to use just soap or vinegar instead of a disinfectant for cleaning that is fine.



Creating Your Bearded Dragon's Habitat

Enclosure:

Fully grown Bearded Dragons require a minimum of a 40 Gallon size tank or enclosure. You can also choose to give your Bearded Dragon a much larger size enclosure than this if you desire. If you are starting out with a baby Bearded Dragon you can choose to start the baby off in a smaller enclosure, even a 10 gallon tank will do. If you do start your baby Bearded Dragon off in a smaller enclosure, keep in mind that you will have to move him/her into a larger enclosure within 6 – 12 months.

Your Bearded Dragons enclosure should be made out of solid material such as glass, Plexiglas, wood, melamine or PVC (A mesh lid is acceptable). Your Bearded Dragons enclosure should never be made entirely out of mesh as it will not hold enough heat to reach desirable basking temperatures.

Lighting:

Your Bearded Dragon will need a UVB light and a heat lamp in his/her enclosure.

The **UVB light is very important** as this serves as their "sunlight" for them by providing all the types of UV rays that the sun provides. If this is not present in a bearded dragon's enclosure then that bearded dragon will not grow properly, can develop Metabolic Bone disease, and will not be healthy. Even if the bearded dragon's enclosure is placed close to window they will still require a UVB light in their enclosure.

The brands Arcadia and Zoo Med both carry good UVB fixtures and bulbs. A fixture that spans 2/3rds the length of the enclosure is recommended.

You should have your bearded dragon's UVB light on for 12 hours in the day and then it should be turned off for 12 hours at night.

Décor:

Your bearded dragon will like to climb on rocks, logs and hide in caves. So be sure to provide your bearded dragon with things to climb on in his/her enclosure. If you want to put real plants in his/her enclosure make sure the plants are non-toxic. Here are a few plants that are safe for Bearded Dragons: Basil, Mint, parsley, spider plants, Wheatgrass, cacti, haworthias, gasterias, oddballs, and sansevierias.

Substrate:

DO NOT use sand or any loose substrate for babies. Having loose substrate in a baby/juvenile's enclosure can cause impaction and has the potential to make your bearded dragon very sick.

Paper towel, newspapers and pet carpets can be used to put in the bottom of your baby bearded dragon's enclosure until he/she is old enough to have loose substrate. (I had some **fiber floor** left over from renovations and cut this to fit the bottom of my cages and find this works very well.)

When your Bearded Dragon reaches **Adult** age (Around 1- 1.5 years old) he/she should be ready to have loose substrate in his/her enclosure if you wish.

Options for loose substrates for adults are **sterilized play sand** from a hardware store, **mineral sand** from a pet store although people often complain this type of sand is messy & dyes their bearded dragon), finely crushed walnut that looks like sand (found at most pet stores, I find this works best), and some people even choose to create a **bio active substrate** for their Bearded Dragon (Similar to creating a small eco system within your Bearded Dragon's enclosure complete with bugs) although this is not commonly done.

Heating:

A **Heat Lamp** should also be present in a bearded dragon's enclosure (I suggest a ceramic heater, since they only give off heat and no light, making it perfect for day and night)

Place your heat lamp at one side of the cage, providing your bearded dragon with a basking side and a cooler side if he/she needs to cool down.

The basking area should be between 95-110 degrees F and the cooler side should be between 80-85.

At night a bearded dragon can handle having the temperature drop down to 70 degrees F. I usually aim for 75 F.

Facts about Bearded Dragons



The average lifespan of a Bearded Dragon ranges from 10-12 years



When fully grown, Bearded Dragons can be anywhere from 15 to 24 inches long (including the tail).



Bearded Dragons are desert animals originally from Australia.



When being handled they like to have all of their feet on something. Many like to sit on your shoulder.



A bearded dragon is a diurnal creature. This means that like humans, they are active during the day and sleep at night.



If a bearded dragon loses (or has lost) its tail it will not grow back. However, with most other types of lizards, if their tail falls off it can grow back.



A bearded dragon is an omnivore which means that it eats both animal and plant based foods. While they don't necessarily eat 'meat', they do eat different types of worms and insects such as Phoenix worms and crickets.



The name bearded dragon comes from its ability to puff its throat up. It can do this when it is angry, excited, showing off for a female. Or sometimes if they accidentally drank too much water or ate too much you will notice their beard looking full.



Bearded Dragons turn a darker colour when they are cold (Turning themselves dark helps them absorb light better) and a lighter colour when warm (Turning themselves a lighter colour helps deflect the light)



When a male Bearded Dragon wants to show off for a female he will turn his beard black and puff it up, and bob his head up and down. The female will then usually respond by doing small nodding or push up like motions and picking her front arms up one at a time and moving them in clockwise circles. Often it looks as if the female is waving.

For questions and support for your Bearded Dragon feel free to call Kelowna Bearded Dragons at 250-826-6395 or email kelownabeardeddragons@gmail.com

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