

## **Inland Bearded Dragon**

*Pogona Vitticeps*

Adult Size: 16 - 20 inches, including the tail.

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Life Span: 6-10 years.

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Male/Female Differences: Examining the base of the tale, just below the vent, more developed bearded dragon males (over 8") will show two clear bulges, while females will have only one, or none. Males will be more dominant, and more likely to exhibit dominance behavior, such as head bobbing or darkening of the beard, but females will also display these behaviors to a lesser degree.

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Compatibility: Bearded Dragons are social animals, and if of the same size can be housed together. The animals should be monitored, however, as sexually mature males will almost certainly fight.

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Origin: These friendly lizards were easily absorbed into the pet trade because of their highly social nature, their calm and peaceful demeanor, and their willingness to breed in captivity.

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Climate: Arid woodlands and deserts of Central Australia

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Day Cycle: Diurnal (awake during the day, asleep at night)

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Temperature: 90 - 100 degrees F during the day, down to low 80's at night. A gradient of temperatures should be provided across the environment, with areas to bask or shade, so the beardie can regulate his or her own body heat.

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Lighting: Like all lizards, bearded dragons require a source of UVB light in order to synthesize vitamin D, and properly metabolize calcium.

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Humidity: Beardies are arid animals and do not require high humidity. Light misting when the animal is shedding, however, will help ensure a clean and healthy shed.

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Habitat/Territory: Eastern and Central Australia. Often found basking on rocks or bushes during the day, or burrowing into the ground in extreme heat.

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Substrate/Bedding: A sand substrate appropriate for reptiles (either crushed English walnut shells or calcium sand) will promote the most natural behavior. Cage carpet or paper may also be used if it is changed frequently.

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Hiding Place/Den: A natural wood or stone den will provide the beardie a place upon which to climb to get closer to the heat source, or under which to hide to shade itself.

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Cage Type: 10 - 20 gallon aquariums are appropriate for juveniles. Adult beardies should be maintained in 40 breeder or 55 gallon tanks. As with most animals, the larger the environment, the better.

Diet: Bearded dragons are omnivores. Their diet should consist of approximately 80% animal matter (e.g. crickets, meal worms, super worms, earthworms, pinky mice etc.) and 20% vegetable matter. Most of our customers find it easiest to provide crickets one day, and the next an assortment of dark leafy greens topped with meal worms to entice the beardie to eat its vegetables.

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Supplements: A calcium supplement is necessary to ensure proper bone development. A good vitamin A supplement (found in reptile vitamin mixes) will ensure proper health for the beardie.

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Diet Precautions: Insects are only as nutritious as the contents of their guts. It is imperative to gut load them before feeding them to your beardie. The crickets should be housed for at least 24 hours with a high quality commercial diet, or an assortment of different foods (fruit one week, vegetables the next, or grains). The scrapings from your cutting board usually make great cricket food.

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Feeding: Place the crickets in a bag with a light dusting of calcium and vitamin powder, shaking the bag to coat the crickets. When preparing worms or greens, simply sprinkle the supplements on top before offering them to your beardie.

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Water Source: A small shallow bowl that cannot be tipped over should always be available. Beardies are much more likely to drink moving water, and will appreciate water dribbled onto the tip of their nose from a misting bottle or drip cup from time to time.

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Grooming: All aspects of the environment should be kept clean, sanitized with a 5% bleach solution whenever necessary. Some beardies nails may grow excessively long in captivity, and can be cut by your veterinarian, or by us at Wilmette Pet.

Oral and Foot Care: Excessively long nails are a rare problem in pet beardies. Keeping a rough stone in the animals enclosure can help to naturally wear them down. If you are concerned about their length, bring your pet into us and we will trim its nails.

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Proper Handling: Juveniles may be somewhat skittish, but all in all, beardies are quite docile animals. Place your hand under the beardie's main body mass and gently scoop it up, keeping a firm but gentle grip, or placing the animal against your chest. Never pick up a beardie by the tail.

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Habitat Maintenance: Scoop sand daily. Replace the sand completely every four months or so, or whenever it begins to smell, and use this time to sanitize the cage. If using cage carpet or paper, replace whenever soiled.

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Health Concerns: Metabolic bone disease results from an insufficient amount of calcium in the animals diet, or the lack of proper UVB lighting. If the animal looks listless, refuses to eat, or has soft or deformed limbs, consult your veterinarian.