



# COASTWAY EXOTIC PETS

**Portslade Clinic**  
11-12 Carlton Terrace  
Portslade  
East Sussex BN41 1XF

**Tel: 01273 426100**  
**Web: coastwayvets.co.uk**

**Guy Liebenberg**  
MSc BVSc MRCVS

**Kim Prescott**  
BVSc MRCVS

**Rowena Killick**  
BVM&S MRCVS

## REPTILE CARE SHEET

### Bearded Dragons

*These care sheets have been prepared by the Coastway Veterinary Group. The information will be useful for all first time exotic pet owners and for experienced owners who have just bought a new species. Information on breeding is not covered.*

#### Before you buy your pet

Looking after any pet is a serious responsibility, ensuring it is properly fed, exercised and housed is only the start. Exotic pets need extra care and so can be a demanding option for any owner. There are several points to consider before taking one on.

- Check which species you are buying and exactly what the requirements of that species are.
- Ensure that your reptile is a product of captive breeding in the UK and was NOT wild caught and imported (this is an illegal and immoral trade).
- Remember, most reptile species kept as pets in the UK are not adapted for life in this climate so you will need to provide an environment that mimics their natural habitat *as closely as possible*.
- The majority of health problems suffered by pet reptiles are a direct result of incorrect housing and/or feeding. Most pet reptiles do not live nearly as long as their wild counterparts because they are not being kept under the right conditions.
- Remember to check what size your reptile will be when it is **fully grown!**
- All reptiles have bacteria in their gut, which may include Salmonella. But the risk to human health is low if you practise good hygiene.
- Vivaria should be cleaned regularly with a suitable reptile-safe disinfectant.

#### Caring for a Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*)

1. Relatively easy to keep - reasonable choice for first time reptile owner.
2. Natural life span: 7-10 years
3. Size when fully grown: from 20cm (8inches) to 45-58cm (18-23inches), depending on species.
4. Can be kept singly or in pairs or trios but **do not keep more than one male in any vivarium** as they show aggression towards one another.
5. Housing:
  - Dark wooden vivarium with glass front and adequate ventilation.
  - 36" long x 24" deep x 18" high (90cm x 60cm x 45cm) for single dragon.
  - 60" long x 24" deep x 18" high (150cm x 60cm x 45cm) for pair or trio.
  - Hatchlings should be kept in smaller container housed in future vivarium.
6. UV Light Source:
  - 5.0% UVB light replaced every 6months unless otherwise stated by manufacturer.
  - Should be on for 8-12 hours per day.
7. Heat Source:
  - Reflector spot bulb in green, red or blue for basking area.
  - Thermostatically controlled heat mats can be used *additionally*.



## REPTILE CARE SHEET

### Bearded Dragons *continued*

8. Wire Mesh Guards should be fitted over all heat sources used within the vivarium to prevent thermal burns.
9. Thermostat: essential to regulate internal temperature of vivarium.
10. Thermometers:
  - At least one at each end of the vivarium to give an accurate reading.
  - Maximum and minimum thermometer sets are useful as they give an idea of the temperature *range* in the part of the vivarium they are placed.
  - Never go by the temperature on the thermostat as this is often inaccurate.
11. Temperatures required:
  - Basking area (hot spot) required at one end of vivarium: 32-36 deg. C (88-97 deg. F)
  - Rest of vivarium: 20-28 deg. C (69-84 deg. F)
  - Night time: hot spot should be off, temperatures in vivarium 20-24 deg. C (69-75 deg. F)
12. Substrate:
  - Dust-free sand, ideally calcium sand as not harmful if eaten by dragon.
  - Should be cleaned regularly with a suitable reptile-safe disinfectant, or changed regularly, to prevent disease.
13. Hides are essential and can be made from cork bark, artificial plants, boxes, plant pots, rock caves, *located away from the hot spot*.
14. Provide basking rocks directly under the basking spotlight.
15. Water:
  - Provide large water dish, big enough for bathing.
  - Change water daily.
16. Food:
  - Insects (crickets, locusts), mealworms, waxworms, earthworms, snails, frogs, small lizards & birds, pink mice (the latter 4 MUST be pre-killed).
  - Vegetable and fruit matter (apple, orange, peppers, broccoli, endive, grated squash, carrots, courgette, watercress, pak choi, dandelion, nasturtium leaves and flowers).
  - Chop food small and mix well; dust with multivitamin & calcium supplement (eg. Vetark Nutrobal).
  - Frequency of feeding depends on age:
    - Adults: 4 or 5 times per week.
    - Juveniles: daily.
    - Hatchlings: 2-3 feeds per day with extra for 'snacking'.

*If you need more detailed information, you can call our Portslade surgery on 01273 426100, or refer to a specialist book or website for more information. You may find the following resources useful.*

- *Exotic Animal Welfare Trust (EAWT) (charity) [www.eawt.org](http://www.eawt.org)*

*Tel: 01388 730500, Fax: 01388 730501*

- *British Chelonia Group (charity) [www.britishchelonigroup.org.uk](http://www.britishchelonigroup.org.uk)*

- *Tortoise Trust (charity) [www.tortoisetrust.org](http://www.tortoisetrust.org)*

- *The Care of Reptiles and Amphibians in Captivity by Chris Mattison, publ. Blandford.*

*Coastway Veterinary Group acknowledge the help and advice of the Exotic Animal Service of the University of Edinburgh, Royal [Dick] School of Veterinary Studies, Easter Bush Veterinary Centre, Roslin, Midlothian, EH25 9RG, in the preparation of this care sheet*