



COASTWAY EXOTIC PETS

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REPTILE CARE SHEET Water 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 WATER DRAGON (*Physignathus cocincinus*)

1. Special requirements:
 - Need water to swim in.
 - Soft bones & reproductive problems common if not kept correctly.
2. Natural life span: 10-15 years
3. Size when fully grown: **3 feet (90cm)**
4. Can be kept singly or 1 male with 1 or more female(s).
5. Housing:
 - Spacious dark wooden vivarium with glass front & adequate ventilation
 - 1 juvenile would require: 18"longx12"deepx18"high (45cmx30cmx45cm)
 - 1 or 2 adults would require: 48"longx30"deepx48"high (120cmx75cmx120cm)
 - These measurements are a *guideline* only. More than 2 dragons housed together will need more space than the measurements given above.
6. UV Light Source:
 - 5.0% UVB light replaced every 6 months unless otherwise stated by manufacturer.
 - On for 8-12 hours per day .



REPTILE CARE SHEET

Bearded Dragons *continued*

7. Heat Source:
 - A reflector spot bulb (either red, green or blue) for basking.
 - Thermostatically controlled heat mats may also be used as an extra source of heat, but aren't essential.
8. Wire Mesh Guards should be fitted over all heat sources 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: 31-34 deg. C (86-92 deg. F)
 - Rest of vivarium: 28-29.5 deg. C (77-84 deg. F)
 - Night time: hot spot off, temperature can drop to 24 deg. C (75 deg. F)
 - May all be reduced by 3 deg. C (5 deg. F) for 2 months in winter.
12. Humidity:
 - 65-85% (can be measured with a hygrometer).
 - Occasional misting using tepid water (can spray inside vivarium daily).
13. Substrate:
 - Can use: mixed potting compost, leaf litter and sphagnum moss, 4" (10cm) deep; or other materials such as newspaper, brown paper or astro turf.
 - BUT it MUST be cleaned/changed regularly to prevent disease.
 - DO NOT use corn cob, wood chippings, sand or other substrate which could cause harm if swallowed during feeding.
14. Hides are essential and can be made from boxes, plant pots, caves, artificial plants, etc., *located away from the hot spot.*
15. Climbing facilities:
 - Branches, logs, rocks, etc. *without any sharp edges.*
16. Water:
 - Provide large water bowl or small pool fitted into the base of the vivarium for swimming and drinking.
 - Change water daily, to prevent disease.
17. Food:
 - Mainly insects such as black field crickets, brown crickets, locusts, also wax worms and mealworms.
 - Supplement with: large earthworms, large snails, fish, pink mice, frogs, small lizards, soft fruit, and occasional defrosted rat pups and day-old chicks.
 - Not all of the above foods have a high nutritional content so provide a good multivitamin and calcium supplement, eg. Vetark Nutrobal. Insects should be dusted with this before each feed.
 - Some water dragons only eat food which is alive or appears to be alive. Wriggling dead food sometimes works, but not always. Insects can be fed live but *it is illegal and considered inhumane to feed live vertebrate prey.*
 - Feed adults only 3-4 times a week to prevent obesity.

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*
Tel: 01388 730500, Fax: 01388 730501
- *British Chelonia Group (charity) www.britishcheloniagroup.org.uk*
- *Tortoise Trust (charity) www.tortoisetrust.org*
- *The Care of Reptiles and Amphibians in Captivity by Chris Mattison, publ. Blandford.*

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