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Steve Leisk BSc.
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FAST FACTS

Common Name

Centralian Bearded Dragon
Vitticeps

Scientific Name

Pogona vitticeps

Colour

Base colour of grey to tan, sandy yellow to orange red with blotches and striations of purples, greys, yellows to reds. Will vary their colour to suit their mood.

Max. Size

to 60cm, usually 45-50cm

Temperament

Very stable, non aggressive.

Ease of Care

Properly housed, these dragons are almost bullet-proof when older. They do need daily attention when young.

Centralian Bearded Dragon

Natural History

Centralian Bearded Dragons are a medium sized species of dragon from the central parts of Australia, ranging from western NSW (Bourke) and south western Queensland (Cunnamulla) to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. They are naturally occurring on the open grass plains, on Spinifex dominated sandy soils and dunes, open woodlands and rocky outcrops. They are visual, daytime hunters, feeding on large quantities of insects, as well as small mammals and reptiles. They also feed on large amounts of herbaceous plants, flowers and berries.

Captive Husbandry

CAGING: Centralian Bearded Dragons can be energetic when they want to, but will usually prefer to "take it easy", basking under a heatlamp while on top of a log or rock. It is important to give them room to move around, and cages measuring 900 x 450 x 500 should be considered a minimum for two adult animals. Babies can be housed in smaller cages, or can have a large cage divided off to make it smaller. It is important to remember that they come from warm climates, where ground temperatures can remain high through the night. If your cage is too big, or not heated enough, they won't perform as well as they can.

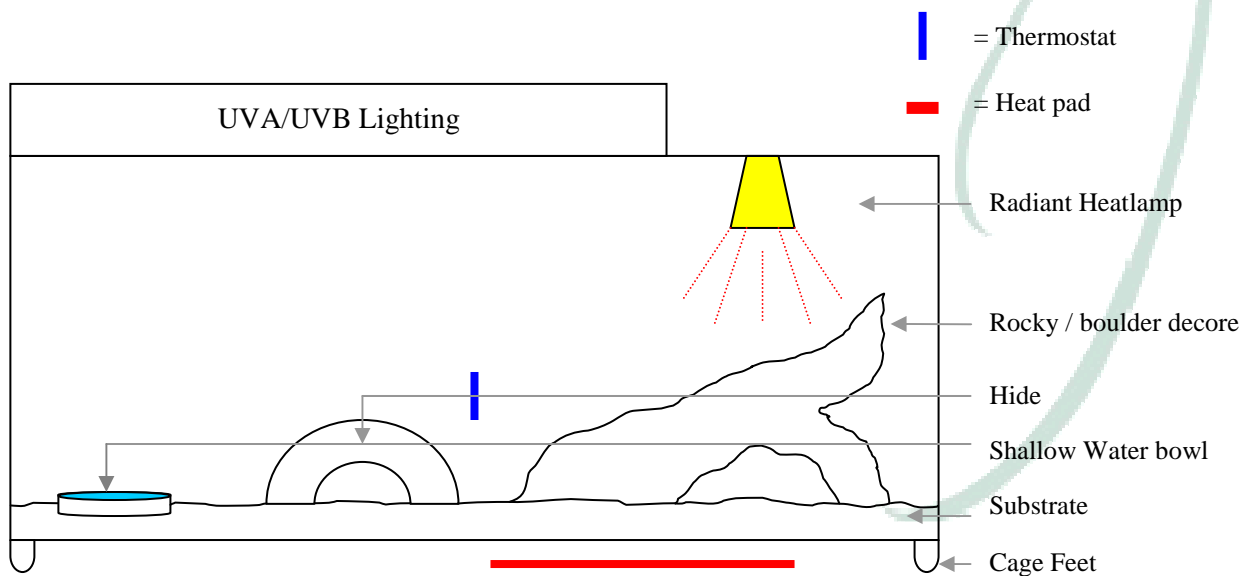
HEAT: Centralian Bearded Dragons come from a hot climate, they are ectotherms (cold blooded), and so they need a source of heat. Regardless of their age, this heat should be in the form of a basking light providing radiant heat downwards into the cage (essentially a mini-sun) and belly heat from the floor up for them to lay on to digest their food. Usually your radiant heatlamp will heat the floor of the cage up sufficiently to supply belly heat as well, but using a heatpad at night to maintain a ground temperature is very important in maximising the amount of energy absorbed from food. We encourage dragon owners to have a radiant heatlamp running during the day, and a heatpad at night, both located at the same end of the cage. Centralian Bearded Dragons will function best when their body temperature is 32-34°C and so will need temperatures around 35-40°C at the warm end and around 27°C at the cool end of the cage. Setting your thermostat at 32-34°C and locating your heat sources and thermostat probe as shown in Cage diagrams 1 & 2 will help you achieve this.

LIGHTING: These lizards are diurnal in nature (day time animals), and so will be active when the lights are on. It is very important to have a day/night cycle in their cage of 14 hrs of day, 10 of night, delivered by UV fluorescent lighting. A minimum of 5.0 UVB concentration is important in maintaining and promoting bone development and nutrient absorption. If your cage is located in such a way that natural sunlight hits it, you will find your lizard wanting to go to sleep when the sun goes down, not necessarily when your lights go out. Locating your cage away from natural sun is a good idea.

HABITAT: Centralian Bearded will use almost anything as habitat. It is very important though, that they can climb something to be above the floor to bask on. A varied selection of caves, rocks, logs, stumps, bones, plastic plants and similar items will all be beneficial to them. Make sure any natural wood products have as much bark as possible removed before use. Clean flooring is important, with sands, wood shavings, barks or paper cat litters providing a clean and effective litter. All floorings should be completely changed every 4 weeks, with spot cleaning occurring weekly. If you are using sand, sifting it with flyscreen is an effective way of spot cleaning. All furnishings should be thoroughly scrubbed every 4 weeks, with a "change of scenery" provided at this time to keep your dragon enthusiastic for new smells and new territories. Cleaning of walls, floor and furnishings should be done with a "reptile safe" cage cleaner. Don't use household chemicals.

Having established that, we recommend that all new acquisitions of dragons be placed on paper towel with simple cage furnishings for the first 21 days. During this time, they will be stressed with the "move", and can shed a bacteria into their environment. Replacing paper towel daily ensures this bacteria cannot get a start in your cage. After 21 days, you will find your dragon to be feeding well, alert and happy, and ready for the full decoration of his cage.

SETTING UP A CAGE: Below is a diagram of how a cage should be set up. Obviously, your own artistic flair will alter how your cage looks



Biological Cycles

FEEDING: In captivity, Centralian Bearded Dragons will primarily feed on insects (especially crickets and woodroaches) and large amounts of chopped vegetables. They will also consume pelleted diets as they grow and become more comfortable in the world. Under no circumstances should small skinks or frogs be offered as food.

When feeding insects, we recommend you follow this routine

- 1) Check that your dragon is warm and happy (and so is enthusiastic to feed)
- 2) Place your tub of crickets in the fridge for 5-10 minutes to "slow them down"
- 3) Open the cricket tub and select the required amount of food and place in another container. Be sure to only select crickets smaller in length than the distance between the eyes of your dragon. We suggest you use something like a large glass jar to place the crickets in to. One dragon should have little trouble eating 5+ crickets in a sitting
- 4) Sprinkle a small amount of calcium dust into the jar and give it a swirl until all the crickets are coated in calcium
- 5) If you have a baby dragon, leaving the jar in the cage for a minute or two can get their interest before tipping the jar and letting the crickets escape. If you tip slowly, the crickets will walk out almost single file, and your dragon can sit and munch away as they walk past. This has the added benefit of reducing the energy spent by the dragon chasing his food down.
- 6) An adult dragon will quickly learn what the jar means, and will have their head in it, munching up crickets before you even get your hand in the door.
- 7) After feeding, return any uneaten live crickets to their container, rinse and dry your jar ready for next time.

We strongly recommend when purchasing insects that you check with your retailer as to when the crickets arrived. Freshly arrived, freshly packed crickets will be a far better feed for your lizard than older stock. As you will be needing fresh crickets weekly, why not place a standing order with your retailer, that way you know they are freshly put aside for you each week.

When feeding vegies, we recommend you follow this routine;

- 1) Rinse and dry a selection of frilly lettuce, red capsicum, zucchini, broccoli, and carrot.
- 2) Finely dice vegies to size, mix and place in a storage container with absorbent paper towel in the fridge. If kept sealed, these vegies will still be able to be used in a 5-6 days time.
- 3) Each morning, place one heaped desert spoon of vegies per lizard on a shallow dish in their cage, sprinkled once a week with vitamins
- 4) Remove the vegie dish in the afternoon/evening, wash and dry ready for the morning.

A bowl of water is also important to have in the cage, but be sure to use very shallow dishes with any babies to avoid drowning. Young animals may also appreciate a light misting of water each afternoon. During this misting, if they are thirsty they will lower their head and raise their back, lapping water off the sides of their mouth.

DEFECATION: Centralian Bearded Dragons eat daily, and generally speaking, defecate every 1-2 days. Their excrement will consist of a white chalky component (the urine) and a dark stool that will contain insect shells. These should be removed from the cage each day.

SHEDDING: If Centralian Bearded Dragons are feeding on the correct amount of food, they will shed every 6-8 weeks (approx) when young, and 8-10 weeks (approx) when mature. The shedding process usually only takes a few days, but is affected by temperature, with prolonged lower temperatures extending the time between sheds and the time taken to shed. The shedding process is as follows;

- Animal starts to look "washed out" or milky in colour
- This may continue for a few days
- Skin cracks and begins to curl at the edges
- Skin flakes off the back and top of head first, tail and belly later
- Dragon might need some help removing skin from the folds and joints, the spikes down the side of the torso, and around the digits.

A dragon in shed will continue to feed and act as if nothing is different.

LOCOMOTION: Centralian Bearded Dragons are primarily quadrupeds (4 feet on the ground) as they move about, climb, feed etc. They use their sharp claws for climbing and digging. When fleeing danger, they can run on their rear legs only (becoming a biped), however this is only at running speed, and so is rarely seen in captive animals. Centralian Bearded Dragons can also swim if needed, and can jump off basking logs from large heights, landing on all fours.

As a Pet

Centralian Bearded Dragons make wonderful pets. Most of the family will be keen to get your dragon out and hold it and let it loose on the floor, on the lounge or practically anywhere else. This is all great fun, and we encourage you to do this regularly. However, care must be taken not to frighten young and baby animals. Generally speaking, we encourage owners to handle their baby dragons for just a few minutes per day, increasing the time each week if the dragon continues to eat and be alert and happy.

It is also important to remember that these animals are 'visual hunters', and so anything that doesn't conform to surroundings (eg a mark on the floor) will be investigated and licked to determine its food potential. Shiny or colourful objects will be attempted to be eaten, so making sure jewellery, knives, screws, nuts and bolts, marbles etc are all out of sight if your dragon is about.

Sub adult to adult dragons will love to get outside in the sun, exploring on the grass and through the garden. **WATCH YOUR ANIMAL CAREFULLY.** You may find your dragon loves a certain spot, or a certain grass type – especially mowing any clover. You may want to avoid putting them near the vegie patch, especially if insecticides have been used. They will also try and eat any insects that may be about, and anything else that "looks good", such as the pegs from the clothesline. A good game to play is to cast a de-hooked fishing lure across the lawn near your dragon, then slowly retrieve it. He should come running after it pronto.

All of these activities are fine provided no chemicals have been sprayed around the lawn or garden, and no predators are nearby (yes, your little dog is a predator).

Breeding

Many people find enjoyment in seeing their own animals reproduce. If you are wanting to breed your Centralian Bearded, there are a few things you need to consider. At DoLittle Farm, we enjoy helping people to breed their dragons, and so we encourage you to contact us should you be considering this side of things.

So when you get your dragon home...

- Make sure your cage is set up, thermostat connected and heating is working.
- Make sure water is in place.
- Place your dragon in its home, secure the cage, and leave him alone
- Do not handle your dragon for the first few days
- Fill in any paperwork you might have (eg wildlife licensing)
- Attempt to feed him the day after arriving.
- If he feeds, allow him a second day of feeding, then begin handling.
- Make sure you are cleaning his paper towel flooring every day for the first 21 days.
- If your dragon doesn't touch his vegies, but murders any crickets that are offered to him, this is fine in those first 21 days. After 21 days, you might withhold a feed of crickets to encourage him to eat some vegies.
- Have FUN!!!

Once a year we recommend you have your animal checked by a qualified reptile vet. A list of reptile vets is located on the DoLittle Farm website.

Going Shopping

Here is a shopping list for you to use when gathering supplies in preparation for your dragon.

- Appropriate licence for keeping protect animals
- Escape proof cage
- White basking lamp
- Night heating (heat pad)
- Thermostat and thermometer
- UV lighting
- Water bowl and food bowl
- Some where to hide, somewhere to bask.
- Paper towel (21 days) and a clean substrate (after 21 days)
- Water spray bottle
- Vitamin and Calcium Supplement
- Cage Cleaner
- A variety of food.

Good luck, Have Fun, Enjoy.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us
at

DoLittle Farm

www.dolittlefarm.com.au

dolittlefarm@dolittlefarm.com.au