

A shopping list for bearded dragons

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This list tells you what you will need soon after you get your new bearded dragon home. You can get most items from pet stores and some at lower cost from a hardware store or building supply.

housing

cage: 10-20 gallon tank for juveniles; minimum of 40 gallon (50 for pairs) for adults. Low tanks are recommended over high tanks as they give best access to the full spectrum light. Supply branches as basking sites in tall tanks. Many people construct their own housing for adult dragons.

screen top: (glass or plastic won't pass the critical UVB light). Again, many people make their own.

basking site: (wood, rock, piece of lumber) that lets their dragon get within 6 inches of the UVB light.

hiding site:, e.g., piece of bark, small box; some like a paper towel as a "blankie" to sleep under
 UVB bulb: Reptisun 5.0, Iguana 5.0. A UVB bulb is essential to prevent metabolic bone disease (MBD).

fluorescent fixture: ("striplight") that will work with a timer (do check; some won't)

basking light: 30-50 watt SPOT light bulb: check actual temperature before using higher wattage

fixture to hold the light bulb: A metal holder with a ceramic center works well. Place this light at one end of the tank, **not in the middle**, to create a temperature gradient.

thermometer. You need 95-105 deg F at the basking site and 70-80 deg F at the cool end.

timer. Both lights should be on 12-14 hours a day (10-12 winters). Both lights should turn on an hour before you feed your dragon in the morning; dragons must be warm to digest their food.

substratum (a contentious area: opinions differ)

for juveniles: paper towels only. Avoid fine silica sand or crushed walnut shells which can cause death by impaction, particularly in young beardies.

for adults: rabbit pellets (my preference), calcium carbonate or silicon sand (play sand, not fine white sand)

food & water:

greens: e.g., collard greens, turnip greens, mustard greens, dandelions, parsley, endive, escarole, etc.

Juveniles will eat more insects than greens and more greens than veggies.

veggies: e.g. green beans, squash, yam, carrot, parsnip, peas, radishes, fruit, etc.; chop well.

crickets of correct size: **no longer than your dragon's head is wide**. Smaller is better. Overly large crickets will be eaten, but can kill your dragon: terminal indigestion. Superworms are good food, once the dragon is big enough (5-6 inches snout-to-vent length). AVOID MEALWORMS for younger beardies; they can cause impaction. Waxworms are good treats: high fat dragon candy.

cricket keeper: e.g., 5-10 gallon tank with screen lid (to keep cage dry and odor-free). Use egg crate, toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls for your crickets to hide in.

cricket food: alfalfa, oatmeal, or commercial diet. Left-over greens, potato slices in a dish for moisture

spray bottle for watering your young dragons or misting your older ones

food supplements

phosphate-free calcium supplement, e.g., Rep-Cal; Powdered Tums work in a pinch.

multi-vitamin supplement such as Herptivite. Use sparingly, a pinch once every 2 weeks.

optional:

thermostat to control the heating element (i.e., the light at the basking site)

extra 10 gallon "feeding tank"

decorations for the dragon lair (if you feed in a separate tank or feed by hand); tree branches (pre-treat with 10% bleach to kill fungus and mites; rinse very well and dry), rocks they can't dig under
flat area with paper towels for "litter" training (this ploy works only with some individuals)

for older dragons: casserole dish to hold superworms as snacks (with some food for the worms).

wadding pond (e.g., Rubbermaid container); put it on your kitchen floor, fill it dragon-neck-deep with warm **not hot** water for a weekly/monthly swim. Warm water can stimulate defecation; you can soak your (adult) dragon before letting him roam (under supervision) to avoid "accidents"

Do NOT buy a "hot rock"; they can badly burn your lizard. Dragons don't sense heat well with their tummies, and can be lethally scorched. They use their "third eye" on top of their heads to detect light levels for basking and for adjusting their circadian rhythms.