

Sapphire Dragons Care Sheet by Steven D. Sanchez

Extensive guide for Pogona Vitticeps



Introduction

Hello! Congratulations and thank you for joining the Sapphire Dragons Family. Quality and care are at the forefront of what we do here at our facility. In this guide I hope to provide you with general education and information on how to properly care for your new bearded dragon.

Background information

The central bearded dragon whose scientific name is the *Pogona Vitticeps* belongs to the inland or central region of Australia, also known as the great outback. There are 8 species of bearded dragons native to Australia. The central bearded dragon (*Pogona Vitticeps*) is the most widely kept animal in domestic captivity in the United States and worldwide. There is also the *Pogona Henrylawsoni* (Rankins/Pygmy/Dwarf bearded dragon) who are a less common species kept in the USA. The *Pogona Barbata* or Eastern Bearded dragon is also a less common species kept in the USA that is mostly used to hybridize the current Central bearded dragon to strengthen lineage and genetics. Bearded dragons are now illegal to export from Australia, as all of Australia's wildlife. Bearded dragons are also part of the *Agama* family of lizards.

Lifespan and FAQs

-Bearded dragons live an average life span of 8-10 years, though it is not unheard of for dragons to live as long as 15+ years with proper care.

-Dragons can get as long as 24" and up to 750 grams, though the average length is around 16-20" long and around 300-500 grams. We suggest monitoring your new dragons weight and length periodically, and keep track of any changes.

- Female Dragons can lay eggs without being mated, though it does not always occur in captivity. The process is relatively simple and easy to care for, but it is important that you do your research to identify gravid females and the process of egg laying.

-A bearded dragon is like any other pet, commitment and care are crucial to the longevity and lifespan of a bearded dragon. The better you do for your animal, the all more likely your pet dragon will have the best and longest life.

-One thing about bearded dragons compared to other reptiles is that they love interaction. These animals are incredibly social, many times people comparing them to dogs and cats. They have such cute, funny, and unique personalities that truly makes them great pets.

Enclosure

- **We suggest a tank no smaller than 3x2x2 or 36"x18"x18". A 4x2x2 enclosure would be optimal and would provide more than adequate space for an enriching enclosure. I do not suggest fish tanks, as they can be too deep and the glass can get too hot causing them to overheat.**
- **A PVC, Melamine, Or Birch plywood enclosure would be recommended. Exo Terra style Enclosures can be great options as well but need to be properly regulated because of temperature risks.**
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- **NO HEAT ROCKS! They can be dangerous and burn the belly of your dragon. I suggest a nice basking platform such as a hide, manzanita wood branch, brick or slate that is elevated. This form of platform will allow your dragon to bask properly without the possibility of them being burned by the electrical heat created by any heat rocks or mats.**
- **Dragons love climbing! Manzanita or ghost wood are excellent items to add into your enclosures. They add enrichment that will help them develop strong limbs and overall body**



UVB and Light Fixtures

- I always tell my folks that UVB will be the absolute most important component of your reptile enclosure. In order for your dragon to properly absorb vitamins and nutrients it needs a proper source of UV.
- A quality UVB light fixture would be a T5 or T8 fixture
- We strongly recommend T5 fixtures by Arcadia Reptiles or Vivarium Electronics. You can find them on ReptileBasics.com



- **SOLARMETER:** a solarmeter is not absolutely necessary, but it will give you peace of mind knowing that your UVB bulbs/fixtures are working in proper order and delivering the right amounts of UV to your dragon, it will also help you measure when your bulbs are wearing out.
- We recommend replacing your UVB bulbs every 9 months to a year! It's like getting an oil change, you don't always wait til 5k miles to change your oil, a little earlier is always better.



Bad Lighting Choices



NEVER USE: Coil or Compact UVB bulbs. These bulbs are most often used for tropical reptiles/amphibians with small and generally tall cages. They emit a more centralized UVB light, and as dragons require longer and lower cages these are not the ideal UVB lights for having UVB across an entire enclosure.



NEVER USE: Colored night heat bulbs, or any night at light. Bearded Dragons are Diurnal meaning they are active during the day and not active at night. When it is dark their instinct is to sleep just like you. These colored lights are meant for nocturnal reptiles and this light at night interrupts the dragon's sleep pattern making them angry and unhealthy. Also dragons see color so using these colored lights as your basking lamp covers their enclosure in one color causing your dragon to be

very confused, aggressive, agitated and
can decrease their appetite.

Basking Bulbs and UVB Bulbs

- We recommend T5 tube bulbs for UVB by Arcadia Reptiles, they will be the 12% UVB Desert species bulb. The next best bulb will be the T5 Reptisun 10.0 UVB tube bulb. Found at reptilebasics.com
- 14% UVB arcadia T5 bulbs can be used in enclosures that are higher than 24".
- For Basking bulbs, you can find halogen bulbs online or at your local reptile store.
- The bulb wattage will ultimately depend on your weather and climate. Some enclosures need higher wattages due to colder weather in their area, others with warmer climates use less wattage.
- **BUY A DIMMER!** A light dimmer will really help you manage temperatures in your enclosure, that way you aren't buying multiple wattage bulbs trying to figure out the best basking temperature. The light dimmer can be purchased on amazon or a department store.
- CHE (Ceramic Heat Emitters) can be used for keepers in areas where your night time temperatures get very cold. CHE emitters do not emit any light, only heat and warm your enclosure to keep steady temperatures. I only recommended a CHE if your temps dip below 60 degrees in your home. You can use a thermostat with your CHE to keep a perfect set temperature.
- Dragons can safely dip into night time temps as low as 60 degrees. Anything lower is not ideal, and that's when I'd recommend a CHE.
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Lastly, **DO NOT USE RED OR PURPLE LIGHTS!** I don't know why these bulbs are marketed for bearded dragons, but they can be extremely harmful for the eyesight of your reptile. They are unsafe and should not be used.

Natural Lighting

-Keep in mind taking your dragon outdoors for natural light is great, but in no way will it function as enough UVB for them. They need a minimum of 10 hours of sunning a day, every single day. I have seen dragon owners that keep their dragon's cage by a window and have sunlight shine in and they think they don't need to have a UVB bulb, this is incorrect. UVB gets broken down through the glass of the window and the glass of the cage. Your dragon's life depends on their UVB bulb.

TIMER

- 12-14 Hour light cycles in the spring and summer are absolutely necessary, we like to use timers that will automatically shut on and off for us to make it easy.
- We like to start our timers on at 530 am and off at 530pm
- During the winter I will change the light cycle hours from 12 to 10 hours a day. We set the timer on from 6 am to 4pm
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Hide, Basking Platform, and Temperature Control

-Bearded dragons love to bask and also love to hide; i dont recommend putting a hide into a dragons enclosure until the dragon is 6 months or older.

- Keep your enclosures simple for your new family member, i suggest a basking spot and a small food dish to start your animal off with. Later as it grows you can add more items inside the enclosure for more enrichment.
- Basking spot temperatures should be around 100-105 for your dragons. 110 is okay for younger dragons but as they age we suggest those temperatures.
- 80-89 degrees on the cooler side of the tank is perfect for when your dragon wants to get away from the heat and relax in a cooler spot. In the cooler area is where I like to add my hide, away from the basking spot and higher heat.
- **TEMPERATURE GUN/THERMOMETER**
 - I recommended having a temperature gun to measure temperature on the basking spot and on cool side of the enclosure. The digital thermometers work fine for measuring general environmental temperature but the temp gun will give you an accurate surface temp which is what you need, especially for the basking spot.



-HYGROMETER/HUMIDITY GAUGE

-Hygrometers measure humidity, you can place one in the center of the tank. They usually stick or attach to the tank. If you want to be extra thorough, you can place one on the basking side and the cool side.

-Humidity levels should be maintained below 40-45% humidity. You can purchase them at pet stores or amazon

SUBSTRATE

- Throughout your research, you will likely find conflicting information about substrate to keep your bearded dragon on. While many will argue back and forth, we will share our experience with using several different substrates and tell you what we recommend
- For starters, we do not ever recommend housing your young bearded dragon on any kind of substrate. Dragons less than 6 months of age should be housed on paper towels or unprinted newspaper that we like to order from amazon. It makes changing substrates very easy for young dragons that love to frequently poop. It also keeps them safe from the possibility of being impacted by substrates.
- As far as adults and juveniles 6 months or older, we believe that loose substrate can be fine and very enriching for your dragon.
- We have used pre washed play sand, corn cobb bedding, and repti chips.
- For our adults we prefer corn cobb bedding. The other substrates can be too dusty and we do not recommend them
- Ultimately substrate use is very subjective, the only thing we are absolute on is that keeping dragons that are too young on loose substrate is not a good idea.

CLEANING & SANITATION

-Like any living thing, bearded dragons will defecate and poop. Dragons pee can also sometimes be confusing for new keepers. Their pee is called urate and comes in a solid white form. You will notice a white piece along with feces, that is both their poop and urine.

-Bearded dragon enclosures should be spot cleaned daily when possible. Like any poop that sits there uncleaned, bacteria will build and spread. This is why spot cleaning is important, to minimize bacteria and keep a sanitary environment for your dragon.

-We like to use disposable gloves to spot clean our enclosures, it keeps cross contamination from happening as bearded dragons can excrete salmonella from their feces.

- Along with spot cleaning it is important to change out substrates regularly. For substrate that is in the form of paper towels or newspaper, you will want to change that out every other day. You do not want poop to be left for too long as we have that bacteria issue we mentioned.

- For loose substrate you do not need to change it out every other day, but you will want to do a thorough spot cleaning. What I like about substrate is that it tends to clump to the poop like a cat litter. Especially play sand and corn cobb bedding.

- after a few weeks you will want to change out the substrate in your enclosure for a new substrate.

- after substrate cleanings you will want to sanitize! There are several products you can use; wipeout by zoomed, F10 solution which is a veterinary grade disinfectant, and chlorahexadine which is a very strong disinfectant and also anti bacterial product for wounds. Some people also use dawn soap with hot water for deep stains and also a steam cleaner which works very well.

-We recommended a deep cleaning at least once a month!



Food/Diet/Supplementation

-Staple Feeders are going to be your insects with the highest protein and nutrition that your dragons should be eating on a regular basis.

- They include: Roaches(Dubia,Discoid, etc), Crickets, BSFL(black soldier fly larvae), and silkworms.

- Staple insects can be fed daily, and should be the main source of nutrition for your bearded dragons .

-Occasional Feeders ; are going to be your insects that are of higher fat content, are safe for your dragon to eat but should be fed less frequently.

-Superworms- Can be fed 2-3 times a week, do not overfeed superworms as they are fatty and can lead to obesity/Fatty liver disease.

-Mealworms - can be fed 2-3 times a week, i never suggest feeding mealworms in consecutive days. Though these insects have a good fat to protein ratio, their exoskeletons make them harder to digest, especially for younger dragons. Feed with caution, make sure temperatures are correct for proper digestion of mealworms.

A note on superworms and mealworms - both of these feeders have a harder exoskeleton called Chitin. Chitin can be tough to digest for bearded dragons and it is wise to make sure temps are correct in order for them to properly digest them. Feeding these spread apart in days will ensure that your dragon won't have any issues with processing them.

- Waxworms - should be fed as a treat. 2-3 times a month in small amounts is okay.

-Hornworms - should be fed as a treat, 2-3 times a month in small amounts is okay.

Repashy - Repashy is a Gel Feeder food replacement supplement that we recommend having on hand and can be safely fed 3-5 times a month. They come in a variety of "flavors" for bearded dragons and other reptiles. We recommend Beardie buffet, Veggie Burger, and Grub pie by Repashy.

Repashy - is a gel mixture with insects and other proteins and nutrients that becomes a "pie" when prepared that can be offered to your dragons. They really do enjoy this supplement and is a good food item to offer when you may be out of feeders.

DO NOT FEED:

- Lighting bugs/Fireflies as these are immediately fatal
- Ants bees, wasps, caterpillars, centipedes, grasshoppers, scorpions, spiders
- Please do not feed anything found outside! Nothing "wild-caught"
- You should only feed farm bred insects specifically bred for reptiles.

Greens/Salad/Veggies

Greens provide excellent hydration for your bearded dragons, and they also help promote a good gut flora which is essential for a thriving bearded dragon. We strongly encourage you to be consistent on feeding your greens to your dragons and follow our recommendations.

-Staple Greens - Collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, Arugula, Spring mix, Carrots, squash, bell peppers.

- occasional fruit as a treat such as strawberry, blueberries, and grapes can be offered in moderation but not necessary. Dragons cannot process sugar, and if overdone it can cause serious health issues.

-We prefer not to feed Kale and spinach as they are high in oxalates, which blocks the absorption of calcium. Calcium is critical for beardies so best to avoid!

DO NOT FEED

- Avocados, Citrus, Rhubarb, Chocolate, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, onions, olives, soybeans, corn, beets, broccoli, kiwi, pomegranate, tomato, potato or any grains

- Some of these food items can be toxic, cause diarrhea, dehydration, and have no nutritional value.

We use Rep Cal products for our vitamin supplementation, Calcium with D3 and Multivitamin



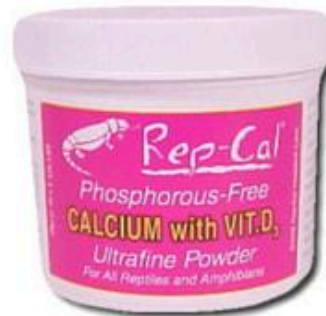
◆ **Rep-Cal Calcium with Vitamin D3** ◆
Phosphorous - Free Ultrafine powder

Rep-Cal Ultrafine (fine grind) is an excellent source of calcium for all reptiles and amphibians. Scientifically formulated from 100% natural Oyster Shell phosphorous-free calcium carbonate with added Vitamin D3 to aid in the absorption of calcium.

Dosage: We ask that you mix Rep-Cal with our vitamin supplement Herptivite. If we premixed the products, the "beadlets" of beta carotene in Herptivite may possibly be damaged during manufacturing by the calcium in Rep-Cal. Mix with vegetables, fruits, and pastes approximately 1/2 tablespoon Rep-Cal with 1/2 tablespoon Herptivite per pound of food.

Before feeding insects:

- 1) Thoroughly mix a 1:1 ratio of Rep-Cal and Herptivite in a plastic bag.
 - 2) Place insects in the bag.
 - 3) Shake slowly until they are completely covered.
- No other supplementation is required.



Size	Item #	UPC #
Calcium with Vitamin D3 Ultrafine Powder		
4.1 oz	200	7-88286-00200-9
7 lbs	210	7-88286-00210-2

◆ **Rep-Cal Herptivite Multivitamin** ◆
Vitamin A requirement from Beta Carotene

Rep-Cal's HERPTIVITE is a superior multi-vitamin, multimineral and amino acid food supplement developed from the latest findings in reptile and amphibian nutritional research. Its formulation contains all natural source ingredients with a base of "sea vegetation." Unlike other companies which use non-nutritional "bases," Rep-Cal's "sea vegetation" base is rich in essential trace elements and minerals. Furthermore, HERPTIVITE contains precise levels of vitamins and minerals combined in perfect balance to ensure correct utilization of protein and other essential nutrients for growth, reproduction, maintenance and many aspects of your reptile's bodily functions. **HERPTIVITE is the first reptile vitamin without Vitamin A. Instead we use Beta Carotene which is an anti-oxidant that is converted into Vitamin A in a regulated way, so there is no threat of Vitamin A toxicity.** Make Rep-Cal's HERPTIVITE the dietary supplement of choice for your reptiles.



Size	Item #	UPC #
Herptivite Multivitamin		
3.2 oz	300	7-88286-00300-6
6 lbs	310	7-88286-00310-2

Dosage: We ask that you mix Rep-Cal with our vitamin supplement Herptivite. If we premixed the products, the "beadlets" of beta carotene in Herptivite may possibly be damaged during manufacturing by the calcium in Rep-Cal. Mix with vegetables, fruits, and pastes approximately 1/2 tablespoon Rep-Cal with 1/2 tablespoon Herptivite per pound of food.

Before feeding insects:

- 1) Thoroughly mix a 1:1 ratio of Rep-Cal and Herptivite in a plastic bag.
- 2) Place insects in the bag.
- 3) Shake slowly until they are completely covered.

No other supplementation is required. Contains no added starch, sugar, soy preservatives, artificial coloring, flavoring, or fragrance. Consult your veterinarian for any special nutritional problems or advice.

Feeding Schedule and supplement use

Hatchlings (0-4 months) :

- Hatchlings this age must be fed 2-4 times a day. 8-10 appropriate sized feeder insects per feeding, along with one feeding being mixed greens.
- Babies this age should be hydrated with a lukewarm bath 3-4 times a week.
- Calcium with D3 should be added to one feeding 5 times a week.
- Multivitamins should be added to one feeding 2 times a week.

Juveniles (4-8 months) :

- Juveniles should be fed 2-3 times a day, we recommend the first meal being insect feeders, second meal being greens, and 3rd meal being more insect feeders
- Calcium with D3 should be dusted with feeders 5 times a week.
- Multivitamin should be given twice weekly
- They can be hydrated 2-3 times a week
- Hydrate twice a week

Sub Adults (8-18 months) :

- Sub adults should be fed 1-2 times a day with one meal being greens, and the other being feeder insects.
- They should half greens and have insects at this age
- Calcium with D3 should be given 3-4 times a week and multivitamin twice a week
- Hydrate once a week

Adults(18 + Months)

-Adult Dragons should be on a diet of 70-80% Greens and 20-30% feeder insects, under special circumstances for ex: a Gravid female the diet may be altered.

- Calcium with D3 should be offered 2-3 times a week along with a multivitamin once a week.

- Hydrate once a week

-Be easy on giving your adult bearded dragons treats too often. You don't want to have issues such as gout, liver toxicity, obesity, and cancers.

Hydration/Bathing

-Bearded dragons receive most of their hydration through their greens, you can also mist their greens with water which in return helps them get extra hydration.

-We do not use water bowls inside our enclosures, instead we recommend bathing in lukewarm water for hydration.

-Luke warm baths for dragons will help with digestion when constipated, help loosen shed, and also allow them some stimulation if they like to swim after they drink.

-younger babies should be bathed more frequently. Adults can go a while without a bath, especially if they are given sufficient greens weekly.

- Some dragons prefer to receive their hydration from their greens rather than a bath, so do not worry if your dragons do not like to drink when bathed. When offering greens just make sure you are misting them so they are still getting hydration when eating their greens.

- if you would like to scrub your animal for a fresh scent, we recommend purchasing some almond soap from beardeddragon.co , they have plenty of great reptile safe soaps that you can use for an amazing smelling dragon !

Brumation!

- **A very important topic, bearded dragons like bears do what is normally known as hibernating. Though in bearded dragons, they do something shorter which we call brumation**
- **Brumation happens when the winter months creep in, bringing in colder temperature and weather. Bearded dragons like other mammals prepare during this time to sleep! They sleep for many reasons, during winter months in the wild there is a lack of food resources. To sustain themselves during these few months of drought they tend to find a nice safe place, typically underground or in between rocks and go to sleep. It is not uncommon for them to burrow to stay warmer underground during this time.**
- **New keepers tend to worry during this time that their dragons are not getting what they need, but in reality this is very important and imperative to their health.**
- **During brumation dragons reset, especially breeding females. It allows their body to rest and regenerate for their needed breeding and egg cycles.**
- **Dragons can brumate anywhere from 3 weeks to 3 months. It also not unheard of for a dragon to sleep a little beyond that**
- **During this time it's important not to bother your animals, and to allow them to go through what they would normally do in the wild.**
- **During this time, when they do wake up, be prepared to offer them small amounts of food and water. They can rehydrate, eat, and go back to sleep if they'd like.**
- **Some dragons come in and out of brumation over the course of 3 months. They will stay asleep for a few weeks, wake up for a few days and bask on warmer days, and then go right back to sleep.**
- **Brumation months are typically from November to February.**
- **During this time you can provide them an extra hide that's big enough for most or all of their bodies to fit in.**



SHEDDING

- **All bearded dragons go through shedding throughout their entire lifespan.**
- **As babies through their first year of life they will shed far more frequently because of their rapid growth rate. It's very common for a dragon to shed every few weeks as they are growing**
- **It is important to have slight humidity between 30-40 percent, especially during periods of deep sheds. This will help them shed easily and prevent any stuck shed or shed pinches**
- **Shed pinches are common in baby dragons when there isn't enough humidity in their enclosures. Stuck shed is normally wrapped around their tails and can cause an indentation that looks like a nip from another dragon.**
- **To help dragons with their sheds, you can give them baths more often, this will help loosen the sheds and make the process easier.**
- **Do not pull off their sheds! There's no reason to assist sheds, they should be falling off on their own**
- **Your bearded dragon will take care of themselves by running up on items in their enclosures to help loosen skin.**

- If you do decide to help your dragon with some stuck shed, get a soft toothbrush and gently rub it on their bodies. This will help alleviate the shed.



Normalize vet visits!

- We strongly encourage you to take all your reptiles for annual vet check ups. Yearly check ups can ensure that your dragon is healthy and all the parameters are checked off regarding overall well being.
- We don't believe it's necessary to take your dragon to the vet younger than a year old, especially if you purchased it from us. Though if you do feel like something suspicious is going on, it is always best to get a vet's opinion.
- One issue that we have found with vets is that they are just general veterinarians that do not have an expertise in exotic reptiles. This can lead some reptile owners down the wrong path and actually do more harm than good. For this reason we strongly recommended finding a vet that works with exotic animals, specifically exotic reptiles.
- During check ups your veterinarian should be checking for; proper breathing, healthy and strong heartbeat, overall body composition and disposition, and also should recommend doing a fecal test.

- **If your dragon comes back with parasites it's not something to be fearful of, all dragons carry a small amount of parasites in their gut and it is actually healthy for them, it is only an issue when it has compromised their immune system along with other symptoms.**
- **We do not recommend doing yearly parasite treatments with antibiotics, dragons can become antibiotic resistant and it can do far more harm than good. Only treat your reptiles with antibiotics when it is advised by a veterinarian.**
- **These are some signs you need to see a vet ;** Partial or complete lack of food interest (lack of appetite)
- Weight loss & poor body condition
- Dehydration (wrinkled skin & sunken eyes)
- Weakness (lying flat)
- Lethargy or dullness (unaware of its surroundings)
- Diarrhea (abnormal or runny feces)
- Blood tinged stool
- Vomiting
- Coughing, breathing with mouth open, bubbling from nose, and or any respiratory distress.
- If you come across any issues with one of our dragons AT ANY TIME, you can contact us and we will give you a free consultation on what to do, and how to handle the situation with our reptile.



Conclusion

We thank you very much for taking the time to educate yourself and read our extensive care sheet, we will continue to update this as new information comes available. Below we will list a number of links to help you with where you can purchase the necessary tools to help you with your bearded dragons. Thanks again! -Steven Sapphire Sanchez

RESOURCES

Enclosures ; Pay as you go with Dubia.com

- Tamaru Designs on instagram makes incredible custom enclosures
- Apex cages is a great custom enclosure creator on instagram
- There are many youtube videos on how to build your own enclosure if you are into DIY projects, simply type in biblical dragons enclosure builds to learn more

LIGHTING

- You can purchase lighting from pretty much anywhere. Chewy, amazon, reptile stores. We like to use reptilebasics.com , LLLreptile.com , Pangeareptile.com , dubia.com , chewy.com

Accessories & First Aid

We love to use beardeddragons.co for lots of products including soap, vitamins, minerals, and other miscellaneous first aid stuff

Feeders

- We use rainbowmealworms.net , allaboutfeeders.com , symtombsf.com

Substrate

- We use chewy.com