



Veterinary Care & Specialty Group

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VCSG

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CONGRATULATIONS DR. JEFF PECK!! FOUNDING FELLOW, JOINT REPLACEMENT SURGERY



Dr. Jeff Peck, a surgeon at VCSG, has been named a Founding Fellow in Joint Replacement Surgery. Congratulations!

A fellowship is a sub-specialization training done after residency. ACVS has several fellowships including oncologic surgery, oral and maxillofacial surgery, minimally invasive surgery, and now joint replacement surgery.

A Founding Fellow is a surgeon who has qualified as one of the original "members" forming the particular fellowship. Founding Fellows are needed in order to create training programs for the fellowship. A person can only do a fellowship under the mentorship of someone who is already a Fellow.

Connect with us on social media!



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VCSG Fifth Annual Continuing Education Conference

August 21, 2021

Registration form is on our website.
Registration deadline is August 10.

RACE APPROVED!



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Vader's Friends of the Month



Vader Pullen



Chattanooga School of Language

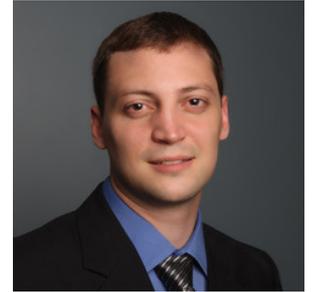
The Key to Connection



Ask the Vet Bearded Dragon Basics

Will Underwood, DVM

Dr. Underwood is a Surgeon at VCSG.



I thought I'd switch up the article this month with something a little different. These reptiles are incredibly popular, and having some basic husbandry and medical knowledge regarding this species is great to have in your back pocket. With that being said, let's get started!

Bearded Dragons (*Pogona vitticeps*) are an Australian species of lizard from the family Agamidae. They're named for the defensive display they make when threatened by a predator. These little guys are found in desert scrub type environments throughout Australia and max out at about 24 inches in length.

Over the past fifteen years or so, Bearded dragons have surpassed Green Iguanas in popularity due to their manageable size, ease of care, and more docile nature. This species also readily breeds in captivity and captive born hatchlings are often available at even basic pet stores. Since probably 98% of successfully keeping a reptile boils down to husbandry, it's very important that clients understand how to properly house and feed their dragon before health issues arise...and preferably before a purchase is made.



Housing

As I previously mentioned, bearded dragons come from mostly desert type environments. They are also semi-arboreal and are equally happy on low lying shrubs and branches as well as on the ground. Hatchlings can be maintained in a 20-gallon long style aquarium while they're young, but a single adult Bearded should be maintained in at least a 75-gallon aquarium to ensure adequate space is available. Branches and rocks, etc., should be provided for them to exercise their climbing needs.

The bottom of the aquarium is best covered by newspaper or reptile carpeting, because it is easily cleaned or discarded and

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will not cause intestinal impactions like sand. Young bearded dragons consume insects and will often ingest sand while hunting, which may lead to intestinal obstructions in very small digestive tracts. If owners insist on using sand as a substrate, they should offer food out of shallow containers so that the risk of sand ingestion is decreased.

Dragons like HOT temperatures and a basking spot of 100°F should be offered. The best way to accomplish this is by providing a spotlight or ceramic heat emitter at one end of the caging. This will allow the dragon to thermoregulate by moving into and out of the basking area as needed to warm and cool themselves. The cooler end of the caging should dip down to 75-80°F. Full spectrum Ultraviolet (UVB) lighting should also be provided because most reptiles require



this for proper utilization of Vitamin D and calcium absorption. This is best provided through a screen enclosure top because glass will filter out UV rays.

Night time temperatures should not drop below 65°F and this can be ensured by using an under-tank heating element or previously mentioned ceramic heat emitter.



Feeding

Bearded dragons are omnivores, so they consume both insects and plants. Youngsters typically consume more insects and then transition to eating more plant matter as they mature. Insects like crickets, mealworms, and dubia roaches may be offered along with chopped veggies like carrots, romaine lettuce, zucchini and squash. Iceberg lettuce should be avoided due to its low nutritional value. All food items should be supplemented with calcium and vitamin powder to ensure vitamin and mineral support.

Water may be offered in a shallow dish but misting with a spray bottle is the best way to get your dragon to drink. They will lap the droplets from themselves and glass, just like they would lap dew in the wild. Don't overdo the misting; remember these are desert creatures and increased humidity may cause health issues like fungal infections.

Common Health Concerns

Metabolic Bone Disease AKA nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism is probably the most common health concern in these little guys. This issue arises from improper husbandry and feeding, and is generally caused by feeding a diet that is too high in phosphorus and too low in calcium along with inadequate UVB lighting. The proper calcium phosphorus ratio for reptiles is 2:1, along with UVB lighting that allows synthesis of calcium. If this isn't provided, a reptile will start to reabsorb calcium from its bones. Owner will often see facial swelling, tremors, skeletal deformation/improper growth, weakness, difficulty moving, and lethargy. Fractures and death may soon follow clinical signs. Respiratory infections are also very common due to improper husbandry. Keeping a dragon too cold or wet can allow bacteria or fungi to quickly colonize within the respiratory tract. Clinical signs may include ocular or nasal discharge, shallow or open-mouthed breathing, anorexia, and lethargy. It's important to note that stress is also an important factor with respiratory infections, and therefore bearded dragons should not be over handled, especially younger animals which are more sensitive.

Following good husbandry practices is the key to success with Bearded Dragons or any pet reptile. Owners who do their research before adopting a Beardie will be prepared for maintaining their requirements. By providing basic environmental and nutritional needs, the majority of health issues can be avoided, and these little guys should have no problem living upwards of ten years in captivity.

