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Central or Inland Bearded Dragon

Pogona vitticeps

FAMILY

Agamidae

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Eastern Australia

IDENTIFICATION

A medium-large, robustly built lizard with a large, triangular, dorso-ventrally compressed head. The "beard" is a gular pouch adorned with scales modified into small spines, which can be inflated as part of a threat display. In older males the pouch may be black. The mouth is often gaped at the same time revealing a vivid yellow oral mucosa. Body colour varies with mood and habitat of origin, varying from grey or brown to buff yellow.

RELATED SPECIES

There are several related *Pogona* species. *P. vitticeps* is particularly closely related to the Coastal Bearded Dragon *P. barbata* - in fact there has been some hybridization between these two allied species, possibly resulting in the German Giant morph.

MORPHS

A number of colour morphs are being developed now, including reds, yellows and albinos. Structural morphs include the German Giant and the Leatherback/Silkback.

SIZE

< 60cm

TEMPERAMENT

Usually good - tame individuals seem to enjoy being handled. Can move very fast however. Males may fight so keep in pairs of 1:1 or trios of 1 male: 2 female.

SEX DIFFERENCES

Males have well developed femoral pores and the gular pouch more developed. Hemipenal bulges are fairly obvious in sexually mature males.

HUSBANDRY REQUIREMENTS

These are large, active lizards. Provide a large, dry vivarium with branches for climbing. Bearded dragons are heliotherms (sunbathers!) and heat lovers. Preferred body temperature is around 34°C so provide a thermal range in the vivarium to provide a background temperature of 25-30°C, with a basking spot up to 35 – 40°C. Full spectrum light source required, usually 10% UV output.

FEEDING

Hatchlings and youngsters are largely insectivorous with large appetites so plenty of crickets, locusts etc. Some vegetable material such as rocket, dandelion leaves, sweet peppers should also be offered. In the wild, adults become more herbivorous and so should be offered plenty of greens. Many captive beardies show varying dietary preferences – some remain largely insectivorous, others become pretty much vegetarian whilst some individuals alternate from one to the other. Keep offering a variety of foods and remember to use a calcium/D3 supplement (dusted on to food and gut-loaded into prey) – give this with every meal for hatchlings and young. Provide a bowl of fresh drinking water although you may never see your beardie drink. Morning mistings help to mimic dew formation and may be lapped up.

REPRODUCTION

Courting males inflate body and gape to show yellow mouth lining. Also head bobs and thumps front feet.

Gravid females scrape a shallow hole and lay 8-20 eggs. Incubation is around 90 days at 28-30C.

COMMON PROBLEMS

Many of the common problems with bearded dragons stem from them being kept at too low a temperature, causing problems with their immune system that allows infections and abscesses to occur. Otherwise metabolic bone disease due to inadequate calcium levels in the diet and/or lack of full spectrum light, coccidiosis and confusion over brumation are common problems.

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