

Central bearded dragon

Pogona vitticeps

 Pogona (Agama barbu) ·  Bartagame

NAC+Vet



REGULATIONS

Not CITES-listed

OPAn: minimum standards for diurnal reptiles (mandatory UVB, heat gradient, enclosure sizes). Keep records; release prohibited. Professional trade requires competence per Swiss rules.



LIFESPAN

8–10 years



ADULT WEIGHT

300–500 g



ADULT SIZE

38–60 cm



LIFESTYLE

Semi-desert, semi-arboreal, diurnal



BODY TEMPERATURE

Ectothermic / poikilothermic



SEXUAL MATURITY

0.5–1.5 years



INCUBATION

21–42 days



LITTER / CLUTCH SIZE

10–40 eggs



Habitat & environment



Type — Spacious, dry terrarium with strong UVB lighting. Two mandatory thermal zones (basking / cool). Materials easy to clean and heat-retaining (glass, plastic, plexiglass). Bilateral ventilation essential (front + sides or back).



Substrate — Sandmat Exoterra®, kitchen paper or newspaper. Avoid sand and soil (risk of intestinal impaction).



Exercise — Large floor area for crawling, branches for climbing, supervised outings outside the terrarium in a safe environment.



Equipment

- Branches/roots for climbing and basking
- Hides on both warm and cool sides
- Flat basking stone under the lamp to aid digestion
- Lateral ventilation (front or sides)
- Shallow water dish (rarely used)
- Pipette/syringe for hydration 2–3×/week
- Weekly bath / gentle lukewarm shower



To avoid

- In-terrarium heat plates
- Hot rocks
- Heat mats inside the terrarium
- Lamps without protective grille (burn risk)



Technical parameters



Hot spot

35–40 °C

Basking spot; flat stone or branch under the lamp.



Cool spot

20–25 °C

Cool zone; same temperature at night (no night heating).



Humidity

30–40 %

Dry; sufficient ventilation to prevent condensation.



Lighting



Photoperiod — 14 h/day



UVB need — Vital



Lamp type — Metal-halide with external ballast (UVB + heat combined)



Recommended brands — X-Reptile · Reptile Expert · Solar Raptor · Arcadia

 **Replacement** — Yearly (metal-halide) — standard UV tubes every 6 months (UVB depletes before visible light)

 UVB does not pass through glass or plexiglass. Place the lamp inside the terrarium, under a protective grille.

 Metal halide lamps are the gold standard for UV: powerful UVB spectrum, far stronger than fluorescent tubes or compact bulbs, optimising vitamin D synthesis and calcium absorption. They lower the risk of metabolic bone disease; intense visible light and even heat drive activity.

Behaviour

Generally docile, curious lizard with marked communication behaviours: head-bobbing in the dominant male, slow arm-waving in the female or subordinate, puffing of the black 'beard' when stressed or displaying.

 **Social life** — Solitary as adults. Male/male cohabitation forbidden (fights, serious injuries). Pair 1 male / 1 female: risks exhausting the female. 2 females or 1 male / 2 females tolerated with enlarged terrarium (+30%), multiple basking spots and constant monitoring.

 **Activity cycle** — Diurnal; peak activity around midday during basking. Nocturnal rest inside a hide or perched on a branch.

Enrichment

- Hunting live insects (moving prey)
- Varied vertical setup: branches, roots, basking platforms
- Supervised outings outside the terrarium in a safe environment
- Weekly bath or gentle lukewarm shower
- Various greens served as small scattered piles

Nutrition

Opportunistic omnivore; diet changes with age. Hatchlings (<5 months): 60–80% insects. Adults: 60–80% plants. Key rules: prey size $\leq$ head width between the eyes (paralysis/impaction risk); insects must be gut-loaded for 24–48 h (calcium-rich greens, fruit, species-specific feed) before feeding, otherwise nutritional value collapses; vary sources to cover vitamins and minerals.

Daily base

Cricket

Protein staple; dust with calcium

Locust

Protein staple; well accepted, low chitin

Roach

High protein, low fat; good staple alternative

Silkworm

Highly digestible, calcium-rich and low in fat

Vegetables & greens

Favour greens with a high Ca/P ratio and rich in vitamin A. Chop finely, vary sources, remove leftovers after 12 h.

Dandelion

Ca/P 5.2

Vit A

Excellent (Ca/P ~5.2); vitamin-A-rich

Houseleek

Ca/P 3

Very good Ca/P ratio (~21)

Clover

Ca/P 5

Good Ca/P ratio (~6.6)

Alfalfa

Ca/P 5.5

Good Ca/P ratio (~6.1); use in moderation (protein-rich)

Arugula

Ca/P 4

Vit A

Good Ca/P (~4.6); vitamin-A-rich

Watercress

Ca/P 3.5

Vit A

Very rich in vitamin A (~422,000 IU/kg DM)

Endive

Ca/P 1.8

Vit A

Staple green, well accepted

Curly Endive

Ca/P 2.5

Vit A

Staple green; bitterness well tolerated

Escarole

Ca/P 2.3

Vit A

Staple green, alternative to chicory

Romaine Lettuce

Ca/P 2

Vit A

Rich in vitamin A (~274,000 IU/kg DM)

Turnip Greens

Ca/P 4.5

Vit A

Good Ca/P; rotate with others

Bok Choy

Ca/P 3.5

Rotate, in small amounts

Parsley

Ca/P 3.3

Aromatic herb, in small amounts

Basil

Ca/P 1.2

Aromatic herb, in small amounts

Zucchini

Ca/P 0.7

Hydrating vegetable; as a supplement, not the staple

Treats (occasional)

Occasional treats, in small amounts. Fatty insects and pinkie mice: limit to avoid obesity and hepatic lipidosis.

Mealworm

High in chitin and fat; max. 1–2×/week

Waxworm

Very fatty; only as an occasional reward

Pinkie Mouse

Very calorie-rich; occasional for adults, never as a staple

Superworm

Even fattier; strictly limit

Hydration

The water dish is rarely used. Prefer pipette watering (droplets on the snout) 2–3×/week, a weekly lukewarm bath (water up to the elbows, ~20 min) or light misting of greens. Fresh greens cover much of the hydration needs.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A essential for mucous membranes, skin and vision. Favour natural sources (dark leafy greens, watercress, dandelion, parsley, romaine) over supplements. Deficiency: puffy eyes, dysecdysis, recurring infections.

FREQUENCY

- Hatchlings (<5 months): 3 meals/day (60–80% insects); e.g. 9 am: 4 crickets; 12 pm: chopped greens; 5 pm: 1 silkworm + 2 crickets
- Juveniles (5–18 months): 1 meal/day, gradual shift toward greens
- Adults: daily (60–80% greens), insects 2–3×/week
- 1 fasting day/week for adults to limit obesity

CALCIUM/PHOSPHORUS RATIO (CA/P)

Key indicator of a food's mineral balance, especially in reptiles: a calcium-favoured ratio supports bone and shell strength. Targets: ≥ 2 = balanced · 1–2 = in moderation · < 1 = avoid (encourages metabolic bone disease). For insects, a calcium powder at feeding time offsets an unfavourable ratio.

TO AVOID

Toxic, severely unbalanced or parasite-risk foods. Strictly avoid.



Avocado

Toxic (persin); cardio- and hepatotoxic



Rhubarb

Very high in oxalates; nephrotoxic



Eggplant

Solanine; potentially toxic



Daffodil

Toxic (alkaloids)



Tulip

Toxic (tuliposides)



Azalea

Highly toxic (grayanotoxins)



Firefly

Lethal (lucibufagins, even in tiny amounts)



Caterpillar

Toxicological risk (urticating hairs, alkaloids)



Butterfly

Often toxic (alkaloids from host plants)



Wild-caught prey

Uncontrolled wild prey (parasites, pesticides)



Health & prevention



Preventive medicine

Annual clinical exam (general condition, shedding, oral cavity, abdomen, masses), regular weighing (weight trend), yearly faecal exam (internal parasites), annual UVB lamp replacement, monitoring of thermal gradient and humidity, weekly bath for skin hydration.



Vaccination

No routine vaccinations.



Surgery & neutering

Common procedures: ovariectomy for dystocia (egg retention), excision of cutaneous/abdominal masses, removal of digestive foreign bodies, wound debridement and closure, partial tail amputation (necrosis), correction of prolapse (cloacal, hemipenis).



Common conditions

Metabolic bone disease (MBD)

SYMPTOMS Soft jaw, bone deformities, spontaneous fractures, tremors, weakness, prostration

CAUSE UVB and/or calcium deficiency, low dietary Ca/P ratio, lack of vitamin D3

PREVENTION UVB 10–12% replaced annually, regular calcium supplementation, greens with high Ca/P



WARNING SIGNS

- Persistent lethargy, lying at the cool end
- Anorexia > 7 days (outside brumation)
- Weight loss, thinning tail
- Abnormal droppings (diarrhoea, blood, visible parasites)
- Shedding problems (dysecdysis), skin stuck on toes/tail
- Bone deformities, soft jaw, pathological fractures (MBD)
- Tremors, seizures (acute hypocalcaemia)
- Open-mouth breathing outside basking, nasal discharge, wheezing
- Abdominal swelling, dystocia (gravid female failing to lay)
- Cloacal prolapse, non-retracted hemipenis
- Brown/yellow crusty skin lesions (mycosis)

If any of these symptoms appear, prompt veterinary care is essential.

Contact an exotic-pet vet as soon as possible.

Dystocia / egg retention

SYMPTOMS Lethargic gravid female, distended abdomen, ineffective contractions > 48 h, anorexia

CAUSE Lack of suitable nesting site, hypocalcaemia, oversized eggs, obesity, dehydration

PREVENTION Nesting box (moist sand/soil) from maturity, adequate calcium, optimal body condition, veterinary follow-up

Internal parasitism (coccidia, pinworms)

SYMPTOMS Diarrhoea, weight loss despite preserved appetite, growth delay in juveniles

CAUSE Faecal re-infestation, poor hygiene, stress, overcrowding

PREVENTION Annual faecal exam, frequent removal of droppings, quarantine of new individuals

Atadenovirus (BDPV / agamid adenovirus)

SYMPTOMS Juvenile mortality, hepatitis, growth retardation, anorexia, paresis

CAUSE Horizontal (faecal) and vertical transmission; asymptomatic carriers common

PREVENTION Quarantine ≥ 90 days with cloacal PCR, strict biosecurity, exclude contaminated breeding lines

Yellow Fungus Disease (Nannizziopsis guarroi)

SYMPTOMS Yellow/brown crusty skin patches, deep ulcerations, necrosis, systemic spread

CAUSE Opportunistic keratinophilic fungus, immunosuppressed host, inappropriate humidity

PREVENTION Strict hygiene, quarantine of new individuals, stress and humidity management

Thermal burns

SYMPTOMS Sharply demarcated ventral/dorsal lesions, incomplete shedding over the area, secondary infection

CAUSE Hot rocks, in-terrarium heat plates/mats, lamps without protective grille

PREVENTION Heat source out of reach, protective grille, thermal gradient external to the substrate

Dysecdysis (retained shed)

SYMPTOMS Retained skin flaps on toes/tail, possible distal necrosis (shed ring)

CAUSE Low humidity, vitamin A deficiency, dehydration, external parasites

PREVENTION Weekly bath, correct humidity, vitamin-A-rich greens, gentle removal of remnants

Ulcerative stomatitis (mouth rot)

SYMPTOMS Caseous deposits in the mouth, bleeding gums, hypersalivation, anorexia

CAUSE Stress, oral trauma, poor hygiene, immunosuppression

PREVENTION Terrarium hygiene, correct thermal parameters, regular oral check

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