

228 The normal behaviour of Bearded Dragons

Social behaviour - Bearded Dragons are solitary animals and are happy to live alone.

Activity Levels - Bearded Dragons do not need a great deal of exercise but they do enjoy stretching their legs and can actually move quite quickly when they need to, especially when escaping predators.

Sleeping patterns - Bearded Dragons sleep for 8 - 12 hours per day and sleep during the night when the sun goes down.

Eating and drinking - Fresh veg with added calcium, meal worms and crickets occasionally. They get water from their food.

Mating and pregnancy - Bearded dragon mating can appear quite violent. Bearded dragons breed very easily. The male will approach and circle the female. His beard will be darkened, and he will bob his head up and down. The female will respond by bobbing her head up and down and waving her arm in a circular motion. The time between mating and laying eggs for bearded dragons is around 4 to 6 weeks.

How environmental factors can influence behaviour

With or without companionship - Male bearded dragons can be aggressive with each other and fight for dominance. They are best kept separately.

Seasonal changes - Bearded dragons will be less active in colder seasons.

Accommodation - vivarium should be monitored so that it is set to the correct temperature. The Bearded Dragon should have enough space to move around.

Bearded Dragon body posture - Bearded dragons exhibit a variety of behaviours. Recognising what behaviour your beardie is exhibiting and why it is showing this kind of behaviour is important to truly understand your pet. It is also helpful to know what behaviours are normal and which ones are signs of stress or illness.

The Wave - Arm waving is used by both sexes to show submission.¹ Young bearded dragons may do a slow "wave" with one of their arms to signal, "I'm just a baby! Don't hurt me!" Your young beardie may even do this when it sees you walking up to it if it is intimidated by you but it usually does this to older bearded dragons who it doesn't know very well.

The Head Bob - When bearded dragons feel they have dominated something or someone they may bob their heads. This is literally what it sounds like—they bob their head as though they were saying "yes." More dominant beardies may do this in passing to younger beardies. Younger bearded dragons may do "the wave" while the older or more dominant dragon may concurrently "head bob."

The Beard Puff - Bearded dragons get their names from the area on their throat where a human might have a beard. This "beard" can be puffed out and darken to black on-demand when your beardie gets upset. It may also choose to puff and darken its beard if it feels threatened, isn't feeling well, or if it is trying to display dominance (often done during mating season to impress the ladies).

Glass Surfing - This is strange behaviour that bearded dragons exhibit in times of boredom and stress. Beardies will run back and forth alongside their enclosure (often a glass tank) and stand on their hind legs trying to run up the side. If your beardie is glass surfing, it may need a larger enclosure, more playtime outside of its enclosure, or something else is stressing it, such as a pet cat staring at it or the loss of a cage mate. Glass surfing should be considered an abnormal behavior and beardies can actually hurt themselves by rubbing their feet, bellies, and faces on the glass repeatedly.

