

Bearded Dragon Lizard Diet

Am I overfeeding my bearded dragon?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

My name is Marina. I am 11 years old and have a female bearded dragon named Lizzie. She is almost 2 years old. Lizzie seems very large for her age, stomach-wise. Her stomach almost reaches the ground. I have been feeding her about 10 large crickets and 10 superworms a day. Is this too much to feed her? I have read that you should only feed adult bearded dragons every other day. I have also become worried after reading *Reptiles & Amphibians for Dummies*. They say: "Care should be taken to feed only proportionately small crickets to these lizards. Large insects, if swallowed entire, may cause titanic seizures that can result in death of lizard." Is this true? I'm pretty sure she chews all her food. Should I be worried about Lizzie? My third question is about spinach. In *Reptiles & Amphibians for Dummies*, they also say it is a calcium binder for beardies. What does that mean? I have fed Lizzie spinach once in a while. Could she die because of it?

I'm impressed that you have done so much reading about your pet! Good for you!

I am concerned that you might be overfeeding insects to Lizzie. There should be no problem with her eating superworms and crickets. What they are talking about in the section on insect size applies to hatchlings and juveniles. So, don't worry about that! However, I think you should start feeding her some commercial bearded dragon diet, plus an assortment of vegetables, cooked or raw, chopped to appropriate size. You also can put some edible plants in her habitat for her to eat. If you are feeding her primarily insects, you are feeding her too many. Try cutting down to half the number of insects and increasing the veggies and commercial beardie diet. It is okay to feed adult bearded dragons every day, as long as you are feeding them a balanced diet that is not too high in calories.

As for your next question, while spinach has calcium in it, it also contains oxalates, which can bind with the calcium in the gastrointestinal tract of a herp. Unless you are feeding her nothing but spinach, there is no problem with feeding it to her. In a varied diet, spinach can be a good part of that diet.

Oh, by the way, it is tetanic seizures, not titanic (my computer changed that from tetanic to titanic when I first typed that in, too!) That word refers to tetany, a type of seizure. And what the book is describing is seizures caused by low blood calcium. This shouldn't happen if you are feeding your dragon correctly and using a basking spot that reaches up to 110 degrees F for her proper digestion. Also use a full-spectrum light that produces UV-A and UV-B ultraviolet light and make sure she has enough calcium in her diet.

My other thought about her weight is that if she is not overweight, she could have developed eggs (even if she doesn't have a mate). Some female beardies will do that, even if kept alone. So if her appetite decreases it could be that she is developing eggs. You might want to consult a herp vet if that occurs.

Good luck with Lizzie.