

Bearded Dragon Complete Food Reference

90+ foods across greens, vegetables, fruit, insects, and toxic items Ratings, calcium-to-phosphorus ratios, and keeper notes for every entry

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Rating key

STAPLE Feed daily or near-daily. Strong calcium ratios, low risk, high nutritional value.

OCCASIONAL Feed 2–3 times per week. Nutritious but needs balancing with staples.

TREAT Once a week maximum. High sugar, high fat, or borderline calcium ratio.

CAUTION Safe in small or infrequent amounts but causes real harm when overfed or used as a staple.

NEVER Toxic, dangerous, or nutritionally pointless. No amount is appropriate.

About the Ca:P ratio column: Ca:P ratios above 1.5:1 are generally considered good for bearded dragons. Foods with ratios below 1:1 are not necessarily unsafe but require balancing with high-calcium staples. Ratios shown are approximate and vary by growing conditions and season. Always supplement with calcium powder regardless of dietary ratios.

Section 1 — Leafy Greens

The foundation of the adult diet. Rotate 2–3 staples together rather than feeding one green daily.

Food	Rating	Ca:P ratio	Notes
Collard greens	STAPLE	14.5:1	The single best all-round green. Feed as the base of every salad.
Mustard greens	STAPLE	10:1	Near-identical profile to collard. Slightly peppery — many dragons prefer the flavour.
Dandelion greens	STAPLE	2.8:1	Excellent calcium. Use pesticide-free sources only. Lawn dandelions are not safe.
Turnip greens	STAPLE	4.5:1	Strong calcium, low oxalates. Widely available year-round. Chop finely.
Endive	STAPLE	1.9:1	Slightly bitter. Works well mixed into a salad blend without affecting overall calcium ratio.
Escarole	STAPLE	1.9:1	Very similar to endive in nutrition and taste. Rotate in when available.
Arugula / rocket	STAPLE	3.2:1	Peppery texture and flavour. Some dragons take to it immediately, others ignore it.

Watercress	STAPLE	2:1	High calcium. Best as one green in a rotation rather than sole offering.
Cactus pad (Opuntia)	STAPLE	—	Wild-type diet staple. High calcium and moisture. Remove all spines and glochids before serving.
Radicchio	STAPLE	1.4:1	Slightly bitter, good calcium. Adds colour and variety to the bowl.
Alfalfa (fresh)	STAPLE	—	High protein and calcium. Useful for juveniles and recovering animals.
Bok choy / pak choy	STAPLE	—	Low oxalates and decent calcium. Rotation rather than daily keeps it in the safe zone.
Kale	OCCASIONAL	3.8:1	Mildly goitrogenic only if fed as the sole green for months. Completely fine 2–3x per week in rotation.
Romaine lettuce	OCCASIONAL	1.6:1	Nutritionally thin but safe. Use occasionally as a texture mixer, not a dietary foundation.
Spring mix (check label)	CAUTION	—	Nutritional value varies by brand. Check every bag for spinach and beet greens — remove before serving.
Spinach	CAUTION	—	Oxalic acid binds calcium in the gut and carries it out before absorption. Daily use causes deficiency even with correct supplementation.
Beet greens	CAUTION	—	Very high oxalic acid. Check any pre-washed salad mix — beet greens hide in them frequently.
Swiss chard	CAUTION	—	Another high-oxalate green. Fine rarely. Not a sensible rotation choice when better options are available.
Broccoli	CAUTION	—	Goitrogenic compounds affect thyroid function in large amounts. A small floret every two weeks is harmless.
Cabbage	CAUTION	—	Same family as broccoli. Harmless in small amounts every few weeks as part of a varied salad.
Iceberg lettuce	NEVER	—	Zero nutritional value. High water content causes loose stools in any meaningful quantity. Replace immediately.

The oxalate problem: Oxalic acid does not just reduce calcium intake. It actively binds to calcium already present in the gut and carries it out before the body can absorb it. A dragon eating spinach or beet greens daily can develop calcium deficiency even with correct supplementation. Food choice and supplementation are two completely separate conversations.

Section 2 — Vegetables

Supporting variety 2–3 times per week alongside staple greens. Not a substitute for leafy greens.

Food	Rating	Notes
Bell peppers	OCCASIONAL	High vitamin C and palatable. A reliable appetite trigger for animals going off greens.
Butternut squash	OCCASIONAL	Good beta-carotene. Shred or grate raw, add to the bowl 2–3x per week.

Acorn squash	OCCASIONAL	Similar to butternut. Less moisture-heavy than cucumber.
Yellow squash	OCCASIONAL	Low oxalates and good texture. A reliable salad filler.
Spaghetti squash	OCCASIONAL	Safe and well-tolerated. Feed raw and shredded.
Pumpkin	OCCASIONAL	Feed raw and chopped. Natural sugars keep it out of the daily rotation.
Green beans	OCCASIONAL	Higher phosphorus than ideal for daily use. Fine 2x per week chopped raw.
Carrots (grated)	OCCASIONAL	High beta-carotene and natural sugars. Grate finely and mix into the salad rather than offering chunks.
Sweet potato	OCCASIONAL	Nutritionally dense, higher sugar. Feed raw and grated. Twice weekly at most.
Asparagus	OCCASIONAL	Fine in small amounts. Chop into short pieces to reduce choking risk for smaller animals.
Courgette/zucchini	OCCASIONAL	Very low oxalates and decent hydration. Good variety and bulk without downsides.
Cucumber	OCCASIONAL	Mostly water with minimal nutritional value. Reasonable moisture addition on warm days.
Snow peas	OCCASIONAL	Slightly higher phosphorus. Fine a couple of times per week in small amounts.
Snap peas	OCCASIONAL	Similar to snow peas. Remove the tougher string before serving.
Parsnip	OCCASIONAL	Safe in small amounts. Higher sugar than most root vegetables. Grate finely.
Tomatoes	TREAT	Acidic and moderate oxalic acid. A very small amount as an occasional treat only. Not a vegetable to rotate regularly.
Sweetcorn	TREAT	High in sugar and phosphorus. Occasional small amount only. Not a useful regular food source.

Section 3 — Fruit

Treats only. High sugar, low nutritional density. Small amounts, low frequency. Always remove stones and seeds.

Food	Rating	Notes
Blueberries	TREAT	One of the better fruit options due to antioxidant content and small serving size. 2–3 at a time.
Strawberries	TREAT	High vitamin C and readily accepted. Cut into small pieces. Once a week at most.
Raspberries	TREAT	Seeds are fine in small amounts. Offer 2–3 pieces at a time.
Blackberries	TREAT	Similar to raspberries. Small amount, once a week. Seeds are fine.
Watermelon	TREAT	Very high water content causes loose stools in large amounts. Small seedless cube once a week.
Cantaloupe	TREAT	Higher sugar than most options. Small piece occasionally. Remove skin and seeds.

Mango	TREAT	Higher natural sugar but contains useful vitamins. Remove skin and keep pieces small.
Papaya	TREAT	One of the better occasional fruit choices. Contains digestive enzymes and is soft enough for all ages.
Peaches	TREAT	Remove the stone completely before offering. Flesh only in small pieces.
Nectarines	TREAT	Same rules as peaches. Stone out, flesh only, small amounts.
Pears	TREAT	Lower sugar than many fruits. Peel and remove all seeds before serving.
Apples	TREAT	Always peel and remove every seed. Apple seeds contain cyanogenic compounds that accumulate with repeated exposure.
Figs (fresh)	TREAT	Good calcium content relative to other fruits. Worth rotating in when fresh figs are available.
Grapes (seedless)	TREAT	High sugar. Quarter them to reduce choking risk. Once a week at most for an adult.
Kiwi	TREAT	High vitamin C and oxalates. Very small amount only, infrequently.
Pineapple	TREAT	High sugar and acidity. Tiny amount very occasionally. Not a useful rotation fruit.
Dates (fresh)	TREAT	Very high sugar. A small piece extremely rarely, if at all. Dried dates never.
Bananas	TREAT	High in phosphorus and sugar. A thin slice very occasionally. Not a regular food.
Cherries	TREAT	Remove stone completely. High sugar — a couple of pieces at most and infrequently.
Plums	TREAT	Stone out, flesh only. Occasional small amount. Higher sugar than optimal.
Citrus — all types	NEVER	Oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit — too acidic. Disrupts gut bacteria and calcium absorption. Not a grey-zone food.
Avocado	NEVER	Contains persin, a fungicidal toxin. Severe toxicity documented. No safe threshold exists.
Rhubarb	NEVER	Extreme oxalic acid concentration. Even a small amount can cause acute kidney damage.

Section 4 — Feeder Insects

Protein source for all ages. Gut-load every feeder for 24 hours before offering. Never use wild-caught insects.

Food	Rating	Notes
Dubia roaches	STAPLE	Best all-round feeder insect. Excellent protein-to-fat ratio, higher calcium than most feeders, soft exoskeleton for easy digestion.
BSFL / NutriGrubs	STAPLE	Extraordinary calcium content. Excellent daily complement to dubias or crickets. Particularly useful during shedding periods.
Crickets	STAPLE	Classic feeder. Movement stimulates natural hunting behaviour. Gut-load for 24 hours before feeding out.

Discoïd roaches	STAPLE	Nutritionally near-identical to dubias. Legal in Florida where dubias are banned. Good dubia alternative.
Silkworms	OCCASIONAL	Soft-bodied and high protein. Well-tolerated across all age groups. One of the better occasional feeders for digestibility.
Hornworms	OCCASIONAL	Low protein but very high moisture. Useful during shedding or early signs of dehydration.
Turkestan roaches	STAPLE	Softer exoskeleton than crickets, less escape risk. Nutritional profile close to dubias.
Mealworms	CAUTION	High phosphorus and hard chitin young dragons cannot digest. Adults tolerate small amounts. Not a primary feeder at any age.
Superworms	TREAT	Do not feed to dragons under 15 inches. Mandibles can bite from inside the digestive tract if not stunned first. Adults: stun before offering.
Waxworms	TREAT	Around 22–25% fat. Dragons love them intensely and will refuse other feeders if overfed. Reserve for underweight animals or recovery only.
Butterworms	TREAT	High fat content similar to waxworms. Treat status only. Irradiated before sale — cannot breed.
Phoenix worms	STAPLE	Another name for BSFL. Excellent calcium. Same staple recommendation applies.
Wild-caught insects	NEVER	Unknown pesticide exposure and parasite load. The most consistent route for introducing dangerous internal parasites into a clean enclosure.
Fireflies	NEVER	Bioluminescence comes from lucibufagins — severely toxic to lizards. A single firefly can kill an adult dragon. All glowing insects carry the same risk.

Gut loading matters as much as species choice. An insect kept on cardboard for three days before feeding is nutritionally hollow. Load every feeder for at least 24 hours on collard greens, dandelion, carrot, and squash before it goes into the bowl. What goes into the insect becomes your dragon's diet.

Section 5 — Never Feed These

Toxic, dangerous, or nutritionally harmful. No amount is appropriate. Contact a reptile vet immediately after any confirmed toxic ingestion.

Food	Rating	Notes
Avocado	NEVER	Persin causes severe toxicity. No safe amount. Documented deaths in many vertebrate species.
Rhubarb	NEVER	Extreme oxalic acid. Acute kidney damage even from small exposure. Outright dangerous at any dose.
Fireflies	NEVER	Lucibufagins are lethal. A single firefly can kill an adult bearded dragon. This is a veterinary emergency.
Onions	NEVER	Thiosulfate compounds disrupt red blood cell function. Leeks and chives carry the same risk.

Garlic	NEVER	Same mechanism as onions. Even small repeated amounts cause cumulative blood cell damage.
Chives	NEVER	Same thiosulfate risk as onions and garlic. All allium family members are off the list.
Mushrooms	NEVER	Difficult to digest and potentially hepatotoxic. Toxicity varies by species — the risk is completely unpredictable.
Citrus fruits	NEVER	Acidity disrupts gut bacteria balance and calcium absorption. Oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruit all included.
Dairy (all forms)	NEVER	Reptiles are lactose intolerant. Cheese, milk, and yoghurt cause severe GI distress.
Raw kidney beans	NEVER	Lectins are acutely toxic before cooking. All raw beans carry a version of this risk.
Buttercup flowers	NEVER	Contain ranunculin, which converts to a toxic irritant compound. Not a food and not safe at any amount.
Daffodil	NEVER	All parts of the narcissus family are toxic. Sometimes appears near food plants in gardens.
Elder berries / leaves	NEVER	Cyanogenic glycosides in leaves and unripe berries. Toxic to vertebrates.
Holly berries	NEVER	Saponins and other toxic compounds. Causes GI distress and cardiac effects.
Processed food	NEVER	Cooked carbohydrates, seasoned food, and anything from a packet cannot be processed by a digestive system evolved for raw insects and fresh plant matter.

If your dragon ate something toxic:

Spinach or beet greens — monitor stools, correct the diet going forward.

Citrus, broccoli in bulk, onion trace amounts — monitor 24–48 hours, offer fresh water.

Avocado, rhubarb, onion, garlic — contact a reptile vet the same day. Do not wait for symptoms.

A firefly or any glowing insect — veterinary emergency. Call immediately.

This reference is compiled from keeper experience and published reptile nutrition data. It is not a substitute for veterinary advice. Ca:P ratios are approximate and vary by growing conditions. Always supplement with calcium powder regardless of dietary calcium content. If your bearded dragon shows concerning symptoms after eating any food, contact a reptile-experienced vet.

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