

REFERENCE GUIDE

Bearded Dragon Supplement Schedule

What to dust and when

A printable quick-reference guide covering calcium, D3, and multivitamin frequency by life stage. Includes label-checking rules, dusting technique, urate monitoring, and a troubleshooting table for when something looks off.

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The Three Supplements You Need

Every correct schedule uses three separate products. Each does a specific job, and mixing them changes the dose of both. Keep them in separate tubs and dust them on separate days.

USED MOST OFTEN

Plain Calcium (no D3)

Calcium carbonate powder with no added vitamins. Corrects the poor calcium-to-phosphorus ratio in feeder insects without stacking fat-soluble vitamins on top.

Label check: Must list *calcium carbonate*. Calcium gluconate delivers far less elemental calcium per gram and dusts poorly.

Widely available: Rep-Cal plain calcium, Zoo Med Repti Calcium without D3.

USED LESS OFTEN — GOVERNED BY UVB

Calcium with D3

Same calcium carbonate with vitamin D3 added. D3 is the hormone that moves calcium from the gut into the bloodstream. Without it, dusted calcium does nothing.

Critical point: D3 is fat-soluble. The body stores excess rather than excreting it. A dragon under working UVB synthesises its own D3, so dietary D3 on top accumulates over months.

USED LEAST OFTEN

Reptile Multivitamin

Fills trace vitamin and mineral gaps a captive diet cannot reliably cover.

Label check: The vitamin A source must be *beta-carotene*. Products listing retinol or preformed vitamin A accumulate to toxic levels in reptiles. If the label does not specify, leave the tub on the shelf.

Beta-carotene brands: RepCal Herptivite, Repashy Superfoods.

✓ SAFE

Vitamin A (as **beta-carotene**)

Body converts only what it needs. No toxicity at normal supplementation rates.

✗ AVOID

Vitamin A (as **retinyl acetate, retinol**, or preformed vitamin A)

Accumulates in tissue. Linked to hypervitaminosis A and eyelid swelling.

SECTION TWO

The Schedule by Age

These frequencies assume a correctly functioning T5 HO UVB with a current bulb and no mesh screen between the bulb and the dragon. Mercury vapor users: see note below.

| Life Stage | Plain Calcium | Calcium with D3 | Multivitamin |
|--|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Baby 0–6 months | 5× per week | 2× per week | 1× per week |
| Juvenile 6–18 months | 4× per week | 2× per week | 1× per week |
| Adult 18 months and up | 3× per week | 1× per week | 1× per week |
| Gravid female Through laying + 2 weeks | 5× per week | 2× per week | 1× per week |

⚠ Do not dust every feeding with calcium + D3

This is the most common mistake on any supplement schedule, especially with babies. D3 stores in fat tissue. Daily D3 on top of working UVB is a reliable path to hypercalcaemia over months. Plain calcium handles most dustings.

Running a mercury vapor bulb?

Remove calcium with D3 from the schedule entirely. MVBs deliver UVB levels high enough that dietary D3 on top creates real accumulation risk. Use plain calcium only, and keep multivitamin at the frequency shown above.

UVB Variables That Change What Your Dragon Actually Receives

- Bulb type.** T5 HO 10.0 tube delivers strong UVB at correct distance. T8 coil or compact bulb delivers much less.
- Bulb age.** T5 HO needs replacing every 12 months regardless of whether it still lights up. UV output fades long before visible light does.
- Screen mesh.** A mesh lid between the bulb and dragon blocks up to 30% of UVB output.
- Mounting distance.** Too far from basking surface and UV index drops below D3 synthesis threshold. Check bulb manufacturer's recommended range.
- Outdoor sun exposure.** On days with an hour or more of direct unfiltered sun, skip the calcium + D3 dusting entirely.

Dusting Technique and Monitoring

How to Dust So the Powder Actually Sticks

The target is a light, even coating that makes the feeder look slightly pale, not chalky-white. Over-dusting changes the smell of the insect, which is the main reason dragons start refusing supplemented feeders.

- Use a zip-lock bag, not a bowl.** Drop feeders in, add a small pinch, seal, shake once or twice.
- Less powder than you think.** You want to see the cricket's natural colour through a faint haze.
- Dust immediately before serving.** Powder falls off crickets within 30 minutes.
- Never mix calcium and multivitamin in the same dusting.** The calcium dilutes the multi and the dose becomes unpredictable.
- For salad greens:** a light sprinkle over the bowl on two to three insect-feeding days per week is enough.

Refusing dusted feeders?

The coating is almost certainly too heavy. Drop back to the smallest visible dusting and run several feeding sessions before concluding anything.

Reading Urate Colour

Urate colour is the clearest free feedback signal on whether the schedule is calibrated correctly for your specific dragon. Check it at every bowel movement. One odd urate is not a pattern. Three in a row is.



Healthy

Soft, off-white. Some give to it — not rock hard, not liquid.



Orange / Yellow

Usually dehydration. Fix hydration first through bathing and dietary moisture before touching the schedule.



Chalky-white, dry

In a well-hydrated dragon, this signals possible D3 excess. Drop calcium + D3 by one feeding per week and monitor for four weeks.

Special Cases and Troubleshooting

When a High-Calcium Feeder Changes the Math

Black soldier fly larvae run a naturally high calcium load and a Ca:P ratio around 1.5:1, compared to the near-inverted ratios of crickets and mealworms. If BSFL, superworms, or hornworms are regular staples rather than treats, the deficit you are correcting through dusting is already smaller.

BSFL-heavy diet:

Drop plain calcium by one feeding per week from the age-appropriate schedule. Do not drop calcium with D3 below once per week unless running an MVB. Natural feeder calcium changes the calcium math, not the D3 math.

Uncertain UVB History (Rescue or Rehomed Dragon)

If you cannot confirm a working T5 HO with a current bulb was in place before the animal came to you, treat D3 as if UVB was unreliable. Run calcium with D3 at 3× per week for the first six weeks while you establish correct UVB, then drop back to the age-appropriate schedule once the setup is confirmed.

Storage and Shelf Life

- Store all powders in a cool, dry location with lids tightly closed.
- A hardened block at the base of the tub means repeated moisture exposure. Replace it — potency is compromised.
- Calcium carbonate: generally effective for 18–24 months from manufacture date when stored correctly.
- Multivitamins: 12 months from opening is a reasonable limit. Check the base of the tub for the date.

When Something Looks Wrong

| What You're Seeing | What It Usually Means | First Action |
|---|---|--|
| Soft or bowing limbs, tremors, difficulty walking | Early metabolic bone disease (calcium deficiency) | Check UVB setup first — on a correct schedule, deficiency almost always traces to a UVB failure rather than supplementation. |
| Reduced appetite, lethargy, consistently chalky urates in a well-hydrated dragon | Possible D3 excess | Drop calcium + D3 to 1× per week, maintain total calcium with plain calcium, monitor for 4 weeks. |
| Eyelid or eye swelling, skin changes after introducing a new multivitamin | Likely vitamin A toxicity (retinol product) | Stop the product, check the label. Contact a reptile vet if swelling persists after discontinuing. |
| Dragon refuses dusted feeders, shakes them off | Coating too heavy | Drop to smallest visible dusting. Run several sessions before drawing conclusions. |
| Consistently orange or yellow urates | Dehydration, not a supplement issue | Fix hydration through bathing and dietary moisture first. Reassess urates over a week. |

Before Your Next Feeding

- Confirm today's supplement** against the schedule for your dragon's age. One product, not two.

- Check the multivitamin label.** Beta-carotene only. If it lists retinol, replace it.

- Check UVB bulb age.** Over 12 months: replace today.

- Dust immediately before feeding,** not in advance.

- Check tubs for clumping.** Hardened block = replace.

- Note urate colour** at the next bowel movement.

This guide is for general husbandry reference only and does not constitute veterinary advice. If your bearded dragon is showing signs of metabolic bone disease, suspected hypercalcaemia, or vitamin toxicity, contact a qualified reptile vet.

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