

CARING FOR YOUR GERBIL



We care about pet care

Gerbils are comparative newcomers to the world of domestic pets. The species we recommend, the Mongolian Gerbil, was first discovered in 1954 and has rapidly become established as a children's pet. Gerbils are friendly, curious and animated. Properly handled they become very tame and affectionate.

They are happiest when kept in pairs as they are by nature 'community' animals and a pair will usually pair for life as long as they are kept together all the time. Two males or two females purchased at the same time will happily share a cage. A mixed pair will almost certainly breed. A fully grown gerbil weighs 3-4 oz (80-110g). The average life-span is 4-5 years.

HOUSING

Your pet shop will help you to select a suitable cage. It should be roomy, escape proof, gnaw proof and easy to clean. A glass aquarium with a secure lid makes an ideal home. The best litter is peat, 2-4ins (5-10cm) deep, so that your gerbil can burrow into it. Gerbils produce only a few drops of urine each day and are virtually odour free. Soiled litter should be removed every few days. Gerbils like to sleep in nests. Your pet shop will advise you on which material to use. Newspaper should not be used as the ink is harmful. Every two weeks the bedding must be changed. Wash the cage thoroughly with hot water before replacing the bedding material. Any disinfectant used must be thoroughly rinsed off. Your gerbils should be kept at normal room temperature. Remember that gerbils do not hibernate.

HANDLING

Gerbils require careful handling. You must be gentle but at the same time firm. There are two methods. Either they should be picked up slowly by cupping the body in both hands, or by gripping them firmly over the back with one hand, the other hand holding the base of the

tail between finger and thumb. Never grip a gerbil around the tail. Some gerbils object to being handled, so care and patience is essential.

FEEDING

A small metal or earthenware food dish should be provided. Feed special gerbil diets, which are mixtures of seeds, grains and nuts. In addition you should feed some pelleted diet which contains essential vitamins and minerals in addition to the correct balance of protein, carbohydrate and fat. Small pieces of carrot and apple are acceptable, as are proprietary gerbil treats and hide chews. Conditioning drops or a vitamin mixture will help to keep your gerbils in top condition and bring out the lustrous beauty of their coats.

WATER

Fresh water must always be available and this is best supplied in a bottle with a tube, attached to the cage.

GENERAL CARE

Food dishes and water bottles should be cleaned and refilled each day. Gerbils are normally very healthy and hardy. Sore nose is normally caused by using unsuitable litter material. Overgrown teeth can be prevented by providing hard chewing material. If the problem does occur they can be clipped back by a skilled operator or your veterinary surgeon. If your gerbil becomes unwell you should seek veterinary advice.

SHOPPING LIST

Cage/Aquarium with lid, Food, Bedding, Litter, Feeding Dish, Water Bottle, Toys, Vitamins and Treats.

This leaflet gives basic guidelines only. It is not intended to be a substitute for a good book on Gerbils. Your pet shop will be pleased to show you their range.

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