

GERBIL CARE SHEET

GENERAL NOTES

- Very good idea to keep more than 1 since they are very social.
 - Littermates generally get along.
 - Brothers get along better than sisters.
 - Pairs will get along but breed quickly.
 - 3 of either sex will fight.
- Are most active at night but are also active during the day.
- Life expectancy of about 3 years
- Nails grow continuously, walking on wood helps wear them down.
- Teeth grow continuously, chew toys must be provided to avoid problems. Mineral stones are also good plus provide extra vitamins and minerals to the diet.
- Gerbils are very sensitive to high pitched sounds.

CAGE

- Quiet location with little traffic.
- Not near tvs, radios, etc.
- Not in direct sunlight.
- Temperature between 20-25°C (if it gets too hot you may place a damp cloth over the cage to cool it off).
- Minimum cage size is 12 x 22 inches for 1-2 gerbils. The bigger the better.
- Wire spacing should be no more the ½ inch apart; galvanized steel is the best option.
- Bottom tray should be about 4 inches deep to keep the bedding from falling out.
- A sand base minimum 1-2 inches deep is recommended since gerbils like to burrow.
- Gerbil safe bedding: aspen, carefresh, critter country, yesterday's news

- Do not use cedar or pine
- Bedding should be 1-2 inches deep.
- Gerbils can be toilet trained by putting soiled bedding into the toilet, they will naturally tend to go there.
- Houses are important for gerbils to retreat to if threatened and they will also hoard food there. They should be about 4 x 8 inches.
- Provide hamster fluff for nesting material.
- Provide a small dish for food and a water bottle.
- Wheels are important for the health of the gerbil, just make sure they are metal and the right size so that no injuries occur. Ten inch diameter, closed on one side is preferred.
- A system of tubes is good for the gerbils natural urge to explore.

ACCLIMATION

- Leave the gerbil alone for the first week, just change food and water.
- Never pick up the gerbil unexpectedly or make quick movements or it will get scared.
- Don't use any perfumed soaps and rub your hand with some bedding.
- Offer the gerbil some food.
- Once it is comfortable accepting food you can gently pet it and hold your hand a little higher up to try and encourage it to climb up.
- To pick up the gerbil use a cup shape with both your hands but be careful it doesn't jump out.

DIET

- 1-2 teaspoons of hamster pellets per day
- Do not feed any fresh foods for at least the first month, after that introduce them very slowly and in very small amounts.
- Fresh foods like carrots (not the tops), apples, and cucumbers are the best.
- Small amounts of pear, lettuce, strawberries are also good.

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- Feed fresh foods in only small amounts daily and remove any from the previous day.
- Gerbils require a small amount of animal protein. Very small amounts of cottage cheese, hamburger, or canned dog food. Live foods such as mealworms or crickets can be fed for protein, about 1-2 per week.

CLEANING

DAILY CHECKS

- Make sure food and water are full
- Remove any fresh food from the previous day, but leave any dry food that has been hoarded.

WEEKLY

- Clean food dish and water bottle with hot water with an animal safe cleaner.
- Place the gerbil(s) with some of the bedding from the cage into a separate container.
- Remove all bedding and hoarded food.
- Clean the cage bars, bottom tray, accessories with hot water and an animal safe cleaner.
- Once everything is dry replace it to where it was, you can use some of the old clean bedding so the gerbil has a familiar scent.