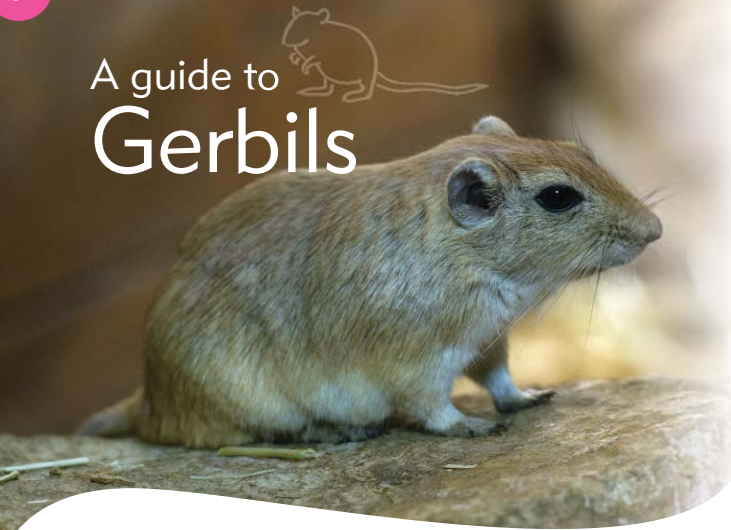


A guide to Gerbils



Gerbils are friendly and inquisitive animals. The best form of home is a gerbilarium, typically made of (plexi) glass with a lid containing ventilation holes but tightly shut to make it escape-proof.

In the wild, gerbils will feed on a diet of seeds, grains and roots, supplemented with insects. They are naturally inquisitive and very active animals and a thick layer of sawdust or other substrate is needed for burrowing and digging tunnels. Gerbils can be handled, but only when done correctly, otherwise you could damage or scare your gerbil.

A gerbil's lifespan is 3-5 years.

Breeds

Gerbils have only been domesticated for the last 30 years so there has not yet been an opportunity for extensive development of coloured varieties. The Golden Agouti is the most common gerbil found in pet shops and is a sandy colour with a dark stripe down the spine and tail. Other varieties include Albino, Black, Cinnamon, White Spot, Dark Tailed White, Dove and Argenté.

Housing

Gerbils may be kept in a wire cage with a solid plastic base, but the best option is to construct a "gerbilarium" (an aquarium with a well ventilated cover). Never keep them in a wooden hutch as they will gnaw their way out. A good cage will be two tiered and have at least two compartments – one for the day and one to nest and hide in at night. As gerbils are kept in pairs or groups the cage can never be too large. Cages must be cleaned out regularly to eliminate odours, germs and bacteria. Natural barley straw is ideal warm bedding for your Gerbil.

They need to be kept indoors and careful thought must be given to where your gerbil's cage will be kept. The temperature in the room should be constant, away from direct sunlight and draughts, and out of reach of any other pets.



Gerbils love to have a dust bath, so there must be room for this also. Place some fine grained absorbent sand (Chinchilla bathing sand is ideal) into a box or bowl, and let your gerbils roll around and flip over. They will thoroughly enjoy themselves and the sand will help to keep their coats healthy by removing excess oils. Supreme Science Bathing Sand is ideal for this. Building sand is too hard and will damage their fur and irritate the skin.

Exercise

Gerbils like to keep themselves busy and, when allowed, spend the majority of their time running around, digging tunnels and investigating their surroundings. Provide plenty of substrate so they can 'hide' underground.

It only takes a few items to create an exciting playground for your pet. Gerbils explore around the edge (and hiding places) first, rather than the middle of the area or run. Place objects like tubes, tunnels, untreated wicker baskets and boxes in the run for them to play with. A thick layer of sawdust, wood shavings or other substrate is needed for burrowing and digging tunnels. Gerbils will chew on available natural wood and this will help keep their teeth in trim. By hiding food and the occasional treat in different areas of the animals' cage, your gerbils will be forced to forage for their food – this will keep them occupied for many happy hours and help to prevent boredom.

Handling

Always approach calmly and, once you are sure your pet is awake, slowly place a closed fist in front of it and allow it to approach. If your gerbil is confident and appears interested, slowly unclench your fist and open your hand. It may well crawl on to the palm of your hand or you can gently scoop it up. If it appears hesitant, you could gently hold the base of its tail, near its body, and lift up, placing its feet on the palm of your other hand (never grab hold of the end of its tail as gerbils can shed the skin to escape, and will be frightened next time you approach).



Companionship

Gerbils in the wild live in large colonies. They are sociable animals and can be truly unhappy if kept in solitude. It is best to acquire littermates in order to avoid fighting. Pairs or groups of males or females will be fine if they are from the same litter. They may accept a gerbil from a different litter, but they may fight. Females and males will be happy together but will result in litters.

Feeding

In their natural habitat, gerbils eat a selection of wind blown seeds, grain and grasses. Gerbils are often mistaken as herbivores, but they are omnivores and do need good quality protein in their diet to keep them healthy. Avoid high levels of fat (peanuts) in their diet as this can lead to obesity and a high cholesterol level. Ensure there is fresh drinking water available at all times.

They also have continuously-growing teeth so they need to gnaw to help wear down their teeth. Gerbils are natural foragers so their daily allowance should be split into two portions, one in the morning and one in the evening. To limit the likelihood of selective feeding, ensure that the first portion is finished before feeding the second. Fresh water should always be available. Their diets should provide just the right amount of protein, whilst remaining low in fat. Always check the recommended daily allowances (on the front of the pack) on any food you buy.

Gerri Gerbil – Complete Muesli



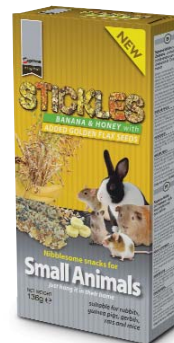
Gerri Gerbil is a nutritionally complete and balanced diet specially formulated for gerbils. It is a specially selected mix of ingredients, including alfalfa, maize, wheat, naked oats, carrots, peas, raisins and whole pumpkin seeds, as well as soya to provide just the right amount of protein in your gerbil's diet, whilst remaining low in fat. Gerri Gerbil does not contain any sunflower seeds as, although gerbils love them, too many can be bad for them. However, the variety of shapes, sizes and textures encourages foraging which is natural for gerbils.



Snacks and treats

Your gerbil will love a treat, and as long as they are good for them, there is no reason why you shouldn't feed one or two occasionally. Try hiding some in the hutch to encourage them to forage, for example with carrot, apple and raisins which they love, and which are good for their constantly growing teeth.

Stickles with Banana & Honey, plus added Golden Flax seeds – Your favourite small animal will go bananas for these tasty, tempting treats. Each stickle is bursting with a blend of delicious ingredients, including banana, honey, Golden Flax seeds, sunflower seeds and millet, all baked onto a special holder for easy handling. A perfect way to interact with your pet. These snacks encourage gnawing, feeding variation and provide environmental enrichment.



Also available:

- Stickles with Popcorn & Carrot
- Stickles with Sweetcorn & Honey

Bedding

Supreme Natural Barley Straw 100% natural, it has been specially processed to reduce dust levels that may irritate your small animal or cause breathing difficulties.



Profile

Latin Name:
Meriones
unguiculatus

Female:
Doe

Male:
Buck

Young:
Pups

Life span:
3-5 years

Litter size:
3-10 pups

Birth weight:
1-3gms

Eyes open:
17 days

Gestation period:
24-26 days

Average weight:
Male 60gms
Female 50gms

Sexual maturity:
Male & Female
10-12 weeks

Weaning age:
21-24 days

Diet:
Omnivorous
(average 5-10
grams per day)

To find out more about:

- ✓ Feeding
 - ✓ Exercise
 - ✓ Handling
 - ✓ Companionship
 - ✓ Common illnesses
- please visit our website.