

Gerbils

Average Size: approximately 4" body, plus an equal length tail

Life Span: up to 3 years

Diet and Feeding:

Staple diet: Choose a fortified diet appropriate for gerbils. Fill the bowl approximately 3/4 full.

Fruits & vegetables:* Treat your gerbil to one teaspoon of chopped apples or carrots twice a week. Take care not to overfeed these fresh foods. They contain a lot of moisture and too much can cause an upset stomach.

Treat sticks & chews: These hard and crunchy treats keep your gerbil's front teeth trimmed, so always keep one in the habitat. Treats should be less than 10% of total food intake.

Water: Change and fill your gerbil's water bottle with clean water every day.

*Remember that fresh food items require their own dish and should be removed from the habitat after four hours to prevent spoilage.

Housing/Habitat:

Housing: Your gerbil needs a well-ventilated home with a solid floor, large enough for a food dish and water bottle and a hiding area (if one isn't built in). There should be plenty of room for all cage accessories, and for her to move around freely.

Bedding: Gerbils love to hide and burrow, so lots of clean aspen or other appropriate bedding is a must. Line the home with 2"-3" of bedding, and change it weekly or more often if needed.

Cage placement: Place the habitat in a cool, low humidity area, out of direct sunlight.

Normal Behavior and Social Interaction:

Gerbils are gentle. They are social and enjoy the companionship of another gerbil (house only same gender pairs who were raised together), as well as interaction with their owners.

Gerbils are inquisitive. They are curious and not easily startled, so they're great for busy, active households. Gerbils have powerful hind legs and are strong jumpers.

Gerbils are burrowers. They love to hide and burrow into their bedding.

Gerbils are clean animals. You'll notice your gerbil grooming herself a lot while she's awake.

Lifting & handling: Handle your gerbil gently—scoop her up in both hands and hold her with cupped hands so she feels safe and secure. Remember to never lift or grip her by her tail.

Special needs: Your gerbil's front teeth never stop growing, so she needs lots of healthy things to chew on like treat sticks and chews.

Exercise: To prevent tail injury, gerbils should only run on a solid-surface exercise wheel.

Health/cleanliness:

Please remember that all pets may bite or scratch, and may transmit disease to humans. Keep your pet's home clean and wash your hands before and after handling your pet or cleaning his home. Infants, young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and the infirm or elderly are at greater risk of infections and should use caution when in contact with the pet or its habitat. Consult your doctor for more information.

The information on this care sheet is NOT a substitute for regular veterinary care.