



Caring for you new GERBIL

The wild gerbil's habitat is arid and desert. Once known simply as "desert rats", the gerbil has about 110 subspecies of African, Indian and Asian rodents. They are adapted to conserve water and therefore largely odourless. They live in colonies and burrows underground.

Gerbils are curious animals and make interesting, lively pets that are fast on their feet that rarely bite.

Gerbils are social animals, and live in groups in the wild. They use sense of smell to identify other members of their clan. As pets they should be kept in small single sex groups or pairs.

The average life of a gerbil is two to four years.

Choosing and buying your gerbil

A healthy gerbil should be:

- Bright and alert
- Have no sign of discharge from eye, ears, mouth and nose
- Have a clean anal area
- Should have no signs of breathing problems
- Should move around the cage easily with no stiffness or staggering
- Should feel well covered and not bony

Housing

Always purchase as big a cage as possible. The size will depend on the number of gerbils you are planning to keep in there. Another thing to consider is to have a glass or metal cage, staying away from plastic or wood so that they can't gnaw right through and escape!

As gerbils are burrowers their cages should reflect that needed stimulation for them. Traditionally their cages will have a deep base for the burrowing. The whole thing will need to be cleaned and disinfected weekly.

Gerbils will appreciate a sand bath to keep themselves clean. They are naturally nervous animals that should be provided with a house or nest box to feel secure. This should be lined with soft animal bedding.

Cardboard or plastic tubes and fun interactive toys are good for stimulating the gerbils along with the pleasure of burrowing. Wheels should not be added as their tails could get injured while using them. Run-a-bout balls can also be very dangerous for the gerbil's wellbeing.

Feeding and Water

Gerbils should stay away from mixes that contain a lot of sunflower seeds. There are plenty of great mixes that will provide them with all the nutrients that they need.

Fresh foods like apple, carrot and other hard fruit or vegetables can be given in small quantities. Always remove uneaten fresh food daily. Although they are desert animals, water should be readily available at all times in a drinking bottle.

Like all rodents, gerbils' teeth grow continuously, making chew toys essential. Mineral stones, wooden chews, hide chews and hard cardboard tubes are useful for this reason.

Handling

It is important to handle your gerbil regularly to help you build up a relationship with him/her. The more you handle him/her the tamer he/she will become in a shorter period of time. Patience is needed.

When you first get your gerbil home make sure you let him/her settle in for the first night to get used to their new surroundings. Slowly introduce yourself by letting them get used to your scent. Gently cup underneath him/her, not to startle them with any sudden movements, as they can be very quick and slip out of your hands. **Never pick up your gerbil by its tail!** They can lose their tails with improper handling.

General Care

Properly cared for gerbils do not normally suffer from ill health. Obesity can be caused by offering too many high fat items like sunflower seeds so these should be given sparingly.

Sore or bleeding noses can be caused by the wrong types of cages, and even stress. If you notice any problems, or if your gerbil's teeth grow too long, you should consult a vet.

Avoid blowing in your pet's face as it could potentially cause a seizure.

Shopping List

- Food (Beaphar/Gerri Gerbil)
- Water bottle/Ceramic or metal Food Bowls
- Escape proof cage
- Transportation Carrier
- Brush/Comb
- Treats
- Bedding (woodshavings)
- Insecticidal sprays
- Gnaw blocks
- Salt Lick
- Bathing Sand
- Minerals/vitamins (Vionate)
- Litter
- Corner Litter Tray
- Litter scoop
- Pet Safe disinfectant
- Book on care specific on gerbils

For more information feel free to talk to any of the Jumanji Pets employees, we are here to help!

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