

CARE ♦ PETS

Animal Hospital & Wellness Center

The Best Care For Your Companion

All about Gerbils

Facts about gerbils:

- Gerbils are members of the rodent family.
- Gerbils can make good first pets and require minimal care, compared to other exotic pets.
- Gerbils live between 3 to 5 years.

Gerbil traits and behavior:

- Gerbils tend to be friendly, clean, quiet and curious pets.
- Never pick a gerbil up by the tail. It can fall off.
- Gerbils rarely bite, if they are handled and socialized at a young age.
- Gerbils can be active both day and night, though peak activity occurs at night.
- Gerbils are social animals and are best housed in pairs.

Habitat:

- Housing should be escape-proof with a secure lid. Plexiglas enclosures for small rodents work well. The most popular housing for a pair of gerbils is a 10-gallon aquarium, which may house 1-3 gerbils.
- Regular cleaning is a must. The solid-sided caging will trap ammonia from urine.
- Provide clean, dry, absorbent and nonabrasive bedding. Provide enough bedding to allow gerbils to make nests.
- Exercise wheels and plastic exercise balls provide an outlet for energy.
- Gerbils like to build nests out of nesting material, especially in the winter months.

Diet:

- Gerbil/rodent pellets provide a complete diet.
- Alfalfa hay should be available for grazing and is a good source of calcium for nursing females.
- Provide clean fresh water via a sipper tube.

Health:

- Regular visits to the veterinarian are recommended for your gerbil. Wellness check ups are necessary to recognize potential disease and treat it early.
- A gerbil's front teeth never stop growing. It is important to give them healthy things to chew on. Chew sticks, wooden blocks and other toys should always be kept in the cage.

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- Signs of a healthy gerbil include bright eyes, clear of any discharge; clean nostrils, clear of any discharge; teeth and nails that are aligned and not overgrown; a smooth and shiny hair coat; clean anus with no lumps or bumps; the fecal pellet should be well formed. Softening of the pellet can indicate G.I. issues.