

# Mice

**Mus musculus**

## Introduction and Origin

It is believed mice have been domesticated for thousands of years, with interest in breeding and fancy mice starting in China around 300 A.D. During the 1700s, the Japanese worked

**The name mouse comes from “mus” a Sanskrit word that means thief.**

extensively on breeding new colours, and visiting Europeans took these mice back home.

Today they are one of the most popular “pocket pets”, especially with kids. Mice make great first pets for kids as they are easy to care for, easy to handle, low cost, and are a great way to teach kids about responsible pet ownership. While the males tend to be a little bigger than the females, basically mice fit very comfortably into the palm of your hand. These days we have a lot more varieties than just the shorthaired and plain colours. Now we have longhaired mice, rex (wavy or curly coat), manx (no tail) and even hairless. Mice can come in nearly any colour or mixture of colours.

## Housing and Cleaning

When housing your mice, it is important to realise just how little these pets are, how easily they can get through small gaps and how hard they are to find once they have escaped. The two most appropriate ways are either in a plastic or a wire cage. Don't be deceived by how tall your tank is – these guys are great climbers and jumpers. The cage should be lined with dust free litter and should have igloos or the like to hide in, and a variety of toys like ropes, ladders, and plastic piping to keep them occupied. A mouse wheel is extremely important as mice love them and they are a great source of exercise and boredom relief. Wood chews are another essential as mice teeth grow



constantly and need to be kept trim by gnawing.

With a wire cage, it is important to be sure that it is designed with small gauge wire so your mice cannot squeeze out. These cages also usually have levels which are heaps of fun for your mice.

With either cage, your mice enclosure should be cleaned out with a small animal safe disinfectant once or twice a week. All the litter should be removed, the enclosure scrubbed, and fresh bedding put in. All toys should be removed and disinfected as well.

## Diet & Water

Mice need a staple diet of grains and seeds. Kellyville Pets stock a pre packed mouse mix which is designed specifically for mice. This should be served in a small ceramic bowl that is not easily tipped over, and should be available to your pet at all times. A few small pieces of fruit and vegetables such as corn, broccoli, peas, beans, carrot, apple, orange etc. can be added daily. Be sure to remove any leftovers at the end of the day.

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Water should be provided fresh daily in a small water bottle as it is easy to refill. Special treats like nuts, mealworms, sunflower seeds, dog/cat biscuits, small animal choc or milk drops, can be given but in moderation.



## Health

When choosing your new mouse you should pick one that has bright eyes and a clean, tidy, well groomed coat, with no dry skin or bald patches. Once at home, get to know your pet and their behavioural characteristics so that if these change, you are aware there may be a problem. Look out for wheezing, sneezing, hunched posture, dull coat, lowered activity, and laboured breathing. These are all signs of an unhappy and probably unhealthy mouse that may need vet attention.

Mice live for an average of around three years and most succumb to respiratory diseases or cancerous tumours in their old age. Mice, especially older ones, should be kept in a draught free area and should be inspected regularly for lumps. Heat is another problem for mice. In summer, always have cool water available and frozen vegies can be offered. A frozen water bottle in the

enclosure is also a great idea.

## Temperament and Handling

Mice are energetic, inquisitive little creatures who are always busy and on the move, providing hours of entertainment with their antics. A friendly mouse will come forward and investigate anything new and unfamiliar in their territory but will quickly retreat to shelter if startled. The best way to pick up a mouse is to simply scoop it up in your hand. If, however, the mouse is a bit jumpy, they can be picked up quickly by the tail, as close to their body as possible and placed onto your arm or hand. Never leave your mouse dangling by the tail as it will scare them and can cause damage as your mouse struggles to get away. Calm, confident, and regular handling will ensure your pet is happy to be picked up.

Being sociable animals, mice are best kept with company. Two males who have been brought up together can be kept together as long as there is never a female introduced because this will lead to fights. It is not advisable to introduce two adult males either,

as they will probably fight.

Females can be kept together very easily. However, personality clashes can occur. One male and several females can be housed together but be

warned – you will soon hear the pitter patter of tiny paws as they have litter after litter.

**Further information on diet, hygiene, worming, vitamins, Vets and much more is available from the team at Kellyville Pets.**

**Learn more  
from the team  
at Kellyville Pets**

At Kellyville Pets, we encourage responsible pet ownership.

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