

PISCES

PET EMPORIUM



Photo by Pisces Pet Emporium

Degu

Octodon degu

Lifespan: 5 to 8 years.

Size: Mature males will usually weigh 250g to 400g (8 to 14 ounces) and reach 25cm to 31 cm (10 to 12 inches) long. Mature females will usually weigh 170g to 300g (6 to 10.5 ounces) and reach 25-31 cm (10-12 inches) in length.

Maturity/Breeding: Degus usually reach sexual maturity around 14 to 20 months old, but can sometimes breed as early as 6 months old. Females are seasonal breeders, but males are fertile year round. Degus most likely breed during the months of September, October, April, May or June.

Enclosure: Degus should be housed in a multi-level well-ventilated wire cage. For one Degu the minimum size should be 12"W x 24"L x 9"H (31cm x 61cm x 23cm). Make sure that if the cage bottom is plastic, the bars go right down to the bottom. The bottom of the cage should not be wire however, or this may result in your pet getting Bumble Foot. Pine or Aspen shavings, or other soft absorbent bedding should be used on the cage floor. Avoid using Cedar shavings because the vapors can cause respiratory problems, itchy skin, and liver problems. Your Degu should also have some sort of house or nest box where it can sleep.

Heating: Degus are extremely sensitive to temperature changes. Room temperatures around 20 °C (69 °F) are acceptable. Keep living quarters away from drafts (i.e. windows, doors or heat regulators etc). Make sure the humidity doesn't drop below 40% or your Degu may suffer from skin problems.

Feeding: A Degu's main diet should consist of a Degu pellet mix. You may also give your Degu sweet potatoes (no skin or green parts), dandelion leaves, some alfalfa, and large quantities of timothy hay for fiber. Never feed your Degu food with any sugar, such as fruits or raisins because they cannot digest sugar. This can lead to Diabetes or Liver Disease.

Vitamins, Supplements & Treats: Your Degu can have the occasional treat of a small amount of unsalted sunflower seeds, or half a peanut. A vitamin C supplement will be required twice per week. Avoid giving any other small animal treats because they may contain too many sugars.

Handling: Degus are extremely social animals and should be kept in pairs. If you keep an individual Degu it will require a lot more human interaction. Never pick your Degu up by the tail, because this can cause the tail to actually break off. The best way to pick up your Degu is to use both hands and scoop the Degu out of its cage.

Health Care: A Degu's incisor teeth continuously grow throughout its life, so your Degu should have a constant supply of chew objects in its cage. If your Degu isn't provided with enough stuff to chew on then its teeth can grow to unnatural lengths, which will prevent your pet from being able to eat. If this does happen the problem should be corrected by a veterinarian. ***Pisces recommends: 8in1 Chew Blocks.***

Grooming: It is a social necessity to give your Degu a dust bath. Not only does it help keep their fur clean, but it helps them be accepted in their colony, by having all the same odor. Chinchilla dust bath works best. ***Pisces recommends: Living World Chinchilla Bath Sand.***

Exercise/Toys: Degus are very active, so in addition to a large cage, they must have an exercise wheel. The wheel should be wire with spaces small enough that their feet don't fall through the holes. ***Pisces recommends: Prevue Hendryx EZ Roller Exercise Wheel 11".***

Degus require lots of different safe and interesting toys. They love wood objects to chew on, but ladders, houses, bridges etc. will also keep them entertained.

Safe Handling of Small Animals*: As with all living creatures, small animals can carry microorganisms which can make people ill. To reduce the chances of infection, always follow these safe handling steps:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after you handle your pet, its food and anything it has touched.
- Keep your pet in a habitat designed for it; do not let your pet roam around the home without proper supervision.
- Keep your pet, its food dishes and cage components out of the kitchen.
- Don't nuzzle or kiss your pet.
- Infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with a compromised immune system have a greater risk of infection. Extra caution should be taken when they are in contact with any animal. Children under 5 should handle reptiles only under adult/parent supervision.

Recommended Books: This care sheet is designed to provide you with some basic information on your new pet. To learn more about how to care for your pet, Pisces recommends:
Degu's A Complete Pet Owners Manual by Barron's Books.

Recommended Supplies:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large multi-level wire cage | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pine or Aspen shavings | <input type="checkbox"/> Lots of wooden (& other) chew toys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nest box (or other house) | <input type="checkbox"/> Wheel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinchilla & Guinea Pig food | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinchilla dust & bath house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Timothy hay | <input type="checkbox"/> Durable toys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ceramic food dish | |

Your New Pet: It is the responsibility of any pet owner to provide their pet with regular veterinary care to maintain their pet's health and to prevent illness.

Should you experience any problems with your new pet, contact Pisces Pet Emporium. We will make every effort to assist you but we may refer you to a qualified veterinarian if the problem is beyond our ability to treat.

A pet is a large responsibility and should not be purchased without due consideration. Pets should never be released into the wild.



4921 Skyline Way N.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2E 4G5
Phone: (403) 274-3314 Fax: (403) 275-6296
www.piscespets.com
Email: pisces@piscespets.com

Reprint of this handout only with permission of and full credit to Pisces Pet Emporium
**Safe handling information courtesy of PIJAC Canada*