

PISCES

PET EMPORIUM



Photo by Pisces Pet Emporium

Gerbil

Meriones unguiculatus

Lifespan: 2 to 3 years.

Size: Mature gerbils will range from 5 to 6 inches long and will weigh 2 to 4 ounces.

Maturity/Breeding: Males reach sexual maturity at 10 – 12 weeks of age. Females reach sexual maturity as early as 9 weeks old. The gestation period is 23 – 26 days, but if the female is pregnant while nursing a litter, she will hold for up to 20 more days. The pups start to eat on their own around 3 weeks old and at 5 – 6 weeks old they can independently. Don't breed your gerbils until they are about 1 year old and show no signs of epileptic seizures or other illnesses.

Enclosure: There are two housing methods: wire small animal cages or glass aquariums. Plastic cages are not recommended as gerbils like to chew and can destroy them. For small animal cages, the spacing of the bars must not be more than ½" apart (otherwise the gerbil might slip through) and the size should be at least 18" L x 12" W x 10" H for 1 or 2 gerbils. Gerbils cannot chew through aquariums, however if you are going to use one you must provide extra floor space due to the lack of levels. Add ramps, shelves and extra toys to provide a more stimulating environment. Also make sure to use a well-fitted screen top. Gerbils like levels in their cages, as well as deep substrate (bedding) to burrow under and build nests in.

Heating: Your gerbil's cage should be located in a dry (low humidity), well-lit area with an ambient temperature of 15°C – 25°C (59°F – 77°F). Avoid direct sunlight and drafts.

Feeding: Pisces recommends a rodent block supplemented with a gerbil seed and grain mixture. You should offer hay and vegetables daily, and occasionally include crickets, mealworms, and fruit. Do not feed any raw beans or cabbage. Fresh water should be available at all times. Food and water dishes should be cleaned often (ceramic dishes are best as chewing will not damage them). ***Pisces recommends: Living World Extrusion pellets and Versele-Laga Gerbil Nature.***

Vitamins, Supplements & Treats: Pisces sells a variety of gerbil treats that your pet will love but these should be fed sparingly. If your gerbil is provided with a varied diet of pellets, seeds, grains, fruits, and vegetables then there is usually no need to provide any other vitamin or mineral supplement.

Handling: Gerbils can move quickly so be careful when handling them. They can be carefully picked up by the base of the tail but keep in mind that gerbils will drop their tails when they are grabbed unexpectedly. Always wash your hands before handling your gerbil to remove any food scents that may encourage it to bite.

Health Care: Gerbils are susceptible to wet-tail, a form of diarrhea that can spread to other animals and can quickly become fatal. It can be caused by stress, spoiled food, a damp environment, soiled drinking water, or eating too much corn or too many fresh greens. If wet-tail is suspected remove veggies and fruits from your pet's diet, isolate the sick animal, and please seek veterinary advice.

The incisors of rodents such as gerbils continue to grow throughout their lives. It is important that your pet has enough toys or blocks to chew on so it can wear down its teeth, otherwise it will have difficulty eating and a veterinarian will have to correct the problem. ***Pisces recommends: Living World Small Animal Mineral Block and 8in1 Block Bites.***

Grooming: As they are native to deserts, gerbils enjoy the occasional dust bath. Use chinchilla bath dust in a small dust bath house or ceramic dish.

Exercise/Toys: Gerbils require regular exercise and mental stimulation in order to keep them from becoming overweight. A wheel should be provided for exercise, preferably a plastic one that is safe for their small feet. They should also be allowed time to explore in a gerbil-proofed play area full of toys, ramps, tunnels etc. to satisfy their curiosity. Similar accessories and toys should be placed in the cage as well. An exercise ball may be used, but only for 5 to 10 minutes at a time because the constant motion causes stress. Remember to keep a close eye on your pet while it plays (in the ball and play area). ***Pisces recommends: Preview Hendryx EZ-Roller 8" Wheel.***

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: Gerbils by Barrons Books.***

Recommended Supplies:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Wire cage or 15 gallon aquarium ❑ Wood shavings or other soft bedding ❑ Ceramic food dish ❑ Ceramic dish for chinchilla bath dust ❑ Water bottle ❑ Gerbil Nature food ❑ Living World Extruded pellet for rodents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Wheel & hamster ball ❑ Chew block ❑ House for sleeping ❑ Timothy hay ❑ Treats ❑ Toys/wood chews |
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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.

1BShould 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.



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**Safe handling information courtesy of PIJAC Canada*