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GERBIL CARE TIPS

HABITAT - A 20-gallon glass aquarium or wire cage with a solid base is recommended. The cage should have good ventilation and be escape-proof (no more than ½” bar spacing for a wire cage). Gerbils love to burrow and explore different tunnels and hides, so providing lots of enrichment is essential. Like all rodents, their teeth grow constantly throughout their lives and need critter-safe chew toys available to them (untreated wood, cardboard, and wooden toys free from harmful dyes). A solid exercise wheel (no wire or metal) is another essential form of enrichment for gerbils.

Gerbils can be difficult to handle as they are high-energy but there are still ways to interact with them outside of their habitat. An exercise ball can be a great way to interact with your gerbil. Make sure the lid is secure and to monitor them at all times while they explore. You can trust-train your gerbil by talking to them, hand feeding them, and allowing them to sniff and walk onto your hands when they feel comfortable.

BEDDING- Like other small animals, gerbils have delicate respiratory systems. DO NOT USE wood-based bedding (e.g. cedar, pine) as the dust can cause upper-respiratory infections. We recommend paper-based bedding (soft-recycled, pelleted paper, or shredded paper). Gerbils prefer a deep layer of bedding to burrow in, about 3-5”.

FOOD - Gerbils should be fed a high-quality gerbil/hamster kibble, pellets, or blocks that do not contain seeds as they are high in fat. Treats may be offered on occasion in small quantities. Some appropriate choices include apples, bananas, bell peppers, blueberries, cooked eggs, mealworms, plain popcorn, and sunflower seeds. A water bottle with fresh water should always be available.

GROOMING - Gerbils are very clean animals and spend much of their time grooming themselves and their companions, so they do not require baths. They wear their nails down naturally so they do not need nail trims. If your gerbil is struggling to keep themselves clean, a vet visit may be in order. Please contact us if you need a recommendation for an exotic veterinarian.

HEALTH - On average, gerbils live 3-4 years. Gerbils are prone to common illnesses like other rodents. Please consult your exotic veterinarian if you suspect any of the following conditions:

Illness/Condition	Symptoms/Description
Upper Respiratory Infection	Heavy or labored breathing, sneezing, eye/nasal discharge, change in appetite, lethargy
Dental issues (malocclusion)	Loss/change of appetite, weight loss, drooling/discharge, facial swelling
Seizures	Freezing, twitching, disorientation

Tyzzler's Disease	Most common infectious bacterial infection in gerbils. Symptoms include depression, unkempt coat, hunched posture, loss/change in appetite, diarrhea
Ear infection	Walking in circles, head tilt, loss of coordination

BEHAVIOR - Gerbils are social creatures that thrive in same-sex groups or pairs. Some of their common behaviors include:

Behavior	Description	Meaning
Foot thumping	Drumming/thumping noise made with their feet	Communicating danger or fear to other gerbils; warning sound
High nose/stranding up	Standing on their back feet with nose in the air	Curiosity, alertness
Scent marking	Rubbing their belly on surfaces	Marking items with the scent gland on their abdomen
Squeaking	Loud squeaking	Fear, pain, surprise
Vibrating	Quiet purring noise or vibrating	Contentment

Gerbils are very intelligent and delightful companions. They make wonderful pets as they are relatively low-maintenance and can form strong bonds with humans. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions about these wonderful creatures!