

ANIMAL TALK
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Necessities:

- Cage
- Bedding
- Food dish
- Water bottle
- Mineral lick
- Chew sticks
- Wheel
- Place to hide/sleep
- Gerbil food
- Dust bath container
- Dust

Extras:

- 10" Hamster ball
- Toys
- Treats

General:

The gerbil's natural curiosity and high energy level make them one of the most entertaining and visual of pets. Their antics can keep even the youngest child enthralled for hours. The gerbil's life span is approximately 3-4 years. Their gestation period is approximately 3.5-4 weeks, with an average litter size of 4-5 babies. Gerbils prefer to be kept in pairs because they are very social and very active. Mixing gerbils from different cages or litters is not recommended as they recognize each other by scent. If you are wanting to mix 2 gerbils that do not know each other, this is best done by dividing the cage in half by a metal screen for at least 2 weeks.

Handling/Exercise:

Remember that gerbils are very fast moving and can very quickly jump or be squeezed too hard by little hands trying to hold them. Sometimes it's best to scoop them up in a coffee cup to place them into your hands. NEVER pick them up by the tail. The skin of the tail can literally slip off the bone. When you wish to handle your pet, talk softly and move slowly. Always wash your hands before and after handling to remove any food smells and to reduce the risk of giving an illness to your pet or possibly catching something from your pet. NEVER use hand sanitizers before handling your pet.

Housing & Bedding:

Gerbils can be housed in a cage no smaller than a ten-gallon tank or equivalent. Remember, they are very active, burrowing animals and they will use all the space they can get. The type of cage you choose is up to personal preference, but there are pros and cons to every type. Tanks can be used, but only if cleaned at least once a week because they do not provide as much ventilation as wire cages and the urine builds up phenols which are toxic to their upper respiratory systems. The nice thing about tanks is they keep the gerbils safe from other house pets and provide a better chance for burrowing/nesting because the bedding can be deeper. Wire cages are good options because they provide more ventilation, but the bar spacing must be no more than 1/2" or less for young animals so they can't escape. Never use household cleaners! When cleaning the cage a 10% bleach solution works best. Our favorite bedding for gerbils is Carefresh, but Aspen shavings can also be used. NEVER use pine or cedar shavings! They tend to choose one corner to urinate in and this can be scooped out daily. Some gerbils can be litter box trained and litter such as Crown bedding can be used in the litter box, but it isn't soft or comfortable enough to be used as bedding. They love dust baths! You'll enjoy watching them and they will have healthier skin and coat.

Diet:

Gerbils are omnivorous, meaning they eat both vegetation and animal fat. As is true with most animals, a varied diet is important for the health of your gerbils. If you purchase your new pet from Animal Talk, they have most likely been eating a mixture of rodent seeds. You should always find out what your new pet has been used to eating and start with that before changing the diet. We recommend switching to Mazuri pellets or Oxbow Healthy Handfuls so your gerbils can't pick and choose the less healthy parts of the diet, but both foods must be mixed and switched slowly to be sure your gerbils eat the new type. When you first bring your new pet home, they should be offered as much food as they want (especially as babies). Once they are six months old, the amount of food you offer should depend on the body condition and activity level of your pet. You can increase exercise if your gerbils are overweight, but otherwise they should always have fresh food and water. Any diet should always be supplemented with fresh foods, including vegetables and dark leafy greens. Fruit, tofu, cooked/unseasoned chicken, and commercial gerbil treats can be used as occasional treats. More than other rodents, their teeth grow very quickly and MUST be kept worn down. Giving them hard chew treats or wood toys will help with this.

Heating & Lighting:

Gerbils do not require extra heat as long as your house doesn't get below 65 degrees and they have plenty of bedding to nest in. If your house does get cold and you'd like to heat the cage, a reptile under-tank heater will work for a glass tank (this does not work on plastic cages), but should be placed only on one end of the tank so your pet can choose to be warmer or colder. Gerbils do not require extra lighting other than the ambient light in the room, but it should be light during the day and dark at night to allow for a normal sleep and eating cycle.

Health & Wellbeing:

They are a very hardy animal with relatively few known health problems other than dehydration, getting too cold or toxic reactions due to airborne toxins. We use specialist Dr. Karen Obegi at 206-365-1102.