



Ten Things to Know Before Adopting a Gerbil

1 Gerbils are Social Animals: Try to get a pair of same sex gerbils who have already lived together; this will help avoid the potential problem of introducing two unfamiliar gerbils to each other. Gerbils enjoy familiar company, and when they know each other, it is fun to watch them play and groom each other. Be very careful with gerbils who do not know each other. They may fight, which can potentially

end in injury or death.

2 Gerbils & Children: With proper care, gerbils live 3 years and possibly even 4 to 5 years. If the gerbil is for a child, make sure an adult is involved to supervise and make decisions for good, nurturing care.

3 Bedding: Carefresh or Aspen is recommended. Never use cedar or pine as these can cause damage to the liver, respiratory system, and other health problems. For nesting material use plain, unscented toilet paper. Fluffy nest bedding is dangerous as a gerbil could accidentally ingest some of the bedding, potentially causing a bowel blockage or, possibly tangle a limb in it. Gerbils love to dig and tunnel, so give them plenty of bedding.

4 Cage & Accessories: An aquarium – the larger the better – with a secure cover and ventilation is the best home for a gerbil. Choosing an aquarium will help keep bedding in the aquarium and off your floors. However, if you choose a cage, make sure the gerbil cannot chew through the cage and escape. A round cage is not recommended, as gerbils love all the little corners of a square cage. A small terra-cotta flower pot makes a good, chew-proof, sleeping house. By putting a jelly jar in the aquarium, you can create a little hideaway or perhaps the gerbils will use it as a potty.



5 Food & Water: Use a good quality commercial food like Gerri Gerbil Food. Whatever brand you choose, try to find one without too many sunflower seeds. Gerbils love sunflower seeds and may not eat the rest of the mix, resulting in poor nutrition. Sunflower seeds are also very high in fat and may cause your little gerbil to become obese. Use a water bottle instead of a bowl. Water in a bowl can become contaminated and often gets knocked over. A water bottle will keep the water clean and prevent it from getting into bedding materials. Offer small servings of fresh veggies (stay away from iceberg lettuce). Recommended are carrots, cucumbers, apples (no apple seeds), and grapes. Also good as treats are plain Cheerios and whole-wheat toast. If you are not sure if a substance is good for your gerbil, do not feed it. Never feed chocolate.

6 Handling: Gerbils are extremely active and intensely curious. They rarely bite but may be inclined to leap from your hands. Never lift or hold a gerbil by its tail or pull on the tail. Because the tail is very fragile, the skin can be stripped off leaving the gerbil with a

naked tail. Do not allow other animals like cats, dogs, and ferrets to be around when you are handling your gerbil. Be very careful of your gerbil escaping.

7 Toys: Be very careful of any plastic toys as these will probably be chewed and could splinter and be swallowed. If you decide to use an exercise wheel, use a solid wheel or intertwine paper cut from a paper bag through the rungs of an open wheel. A gerbil can get its long tail caught in an open wheel. Gerbils love tubes – you can use cardboard tubes from paper towels and wrapping paper. Provide wood chew toys from a pet store.

8 Sand Baths: Gerbils enjoy a sand bath now and then. Place a little clean sand at the bottom of the aquarium. Clean play sand can be purchased at Toys R Us.

9 Teeth: Gerbil teeth are continually growing and, under normal circumstances, teeth will grind down. Provide hard things for your gerbil to chew on, like wooden blocks from a pet store, paper towel rolls, and an occasional piece of dog biscuit. If your gerbil cannot eat properly, or cannot close his mouth, take him to a veterinarian who will trim his teeth.

10 Illness: In small animals, illness can progress rapidly. Find a vet who treats small animals. Timely treatment may save your gerbil's life.

Helpful Resources:

Barron's A Complete Pet Owners Manual : Gerbils by Katrin Behrand

www.russelrabbit.com (Gerri Gerbil Food) "Supreme Pet Foods"

www.gerbils.co.uk – "National Gerbil Society"

