

Hand Taming

If you buy your gerbils from a good source, the job of taming should be well on the way.

Wait until pups are around six weeks old before bringing them home. This will give them time to learn from

their parents and siblings gerbil behavior and to not fear humans.

First, give them a few hours to settle into their new home.

Then, introduce your hand into their tank and let them sniff. It is not unusual for young pups to mouth or taste you as they explore and examine your hand. Don't jerk your hand away. Give them a quick puff of air in the face (like your blowing out a candle) to tell them "no". This type of exploratory nipping is a habit they quickly outgrow.

Hand training can be easy if you move patiently and slowly. Each morning when you



feed your gerbils remove all the sunflower seeds from their food. Put these aside. Then throughout the day put a few sunflower seeds in

the palm of your hand. Quietly rest your hand on the bedding with a few seeds on it.

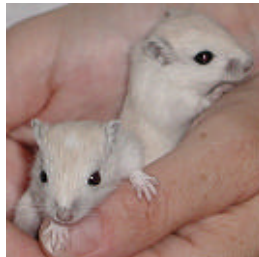
Before long they will be used to your hand, and see you as a glorified seed dispenser and a ladder to the outside world.



Some gerbils love to have their noses and foreheads rubbed. Try lifting them out of the tank. You can cradle them in a cave with two hands held against your body; some of them will go to sleep, and others have a silent purr like kittens. Or let them run along your hands, arms, and shoulders.

Within two weeks they should be very friendly, and enjoy being held. It is recommended that children do not handle the gerbils, until you are confident that the gerbils are tame. This avoids a bad early experience, and it is easier to tame gerbils when only one person is working with them. Then children can gradually begin to play with them.

Each gerbil has a personality of its own. Have fun getting to know them. Enjoy!



Web Site: www.AGSgerbils.org
Contact: jmorrow@agsgerbils.org

Pet Store: _____

Phone #: _____

Date of Purchase: _____

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EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITY EXCELLENCE



Congratulations on adopting gerbils! With lots of love, attention, and good care you have just purchased loyal friends.

For the next three to five years you will have a special companion that will never be too busy to listen or to entertain you.

Gerbil Care

A Special Friend:

Gerbils are fun to watch. Their antics and family interactions can entertain you for hours. They are also incredibly friendly pets. They can be taught to climb up onto your shoulder and sit there, or on your head! Gerbils require a minimum of care. Their homes take up little space, they are low-maintenance, and they do not need frequent vet visits.

Gerbils are very friendly and rarely bite.

Gerbils are social animals that need a gerbil companion. Keep your gerbils in pairs. If you keep all males you can have a larger clan.

WARNING: Do not mix two adult gerbils that are strangers. They will fight violently.

Housing:

A ten gallon aquarium is the most popular choice for a gerbil home, for a



number of good reasons. It is inexpensive, easy to clean, roomy, and allows for great creativity. You will need a tank cover, to keep the gerbils from escaping. Gerbils are great climbers and leapers. Make sure the lid is secure with commercial or homemade lid clips, especially if you have cats.

General guidelines:

- * 10 gallon tank 2 gerbils
- * 15 gallon tank 3 gerbils
- * 20 gallon tank 4-5 male gerbils

Wire cages are not recommended. First, with all the playing, scurrying, and digging the bedding ends up all over the floor. Gerbils

often gnaw on wire cages incessantly, which is annoying to you and harmful to them.

A plastic Habitrail is not a good choice. Although these are popular, they have poor ventilation and smell rather quickly. Plastic housing easy for gerbils to escape from and over time is gnawed to ruins.

Bedding:

Gerbils require bedding to absorb their urine, as well as for digging fun. The best choices are aspen, Carefresh processed paper, and corncob beddings. The average 10-gallons with two gerbils in it will only need cleaning every 2-3 weeks.

If water is spilled or it smells, you will have to change the bedding. When cleaned on a regular basis a gerbil tank/cage should never smell.



Fill the tank 1/3 full with bedding. Gerbils love to pile it up, and bury their food in it.

WARNING: Cedar or Pine Bedding can harm gerbils. These beddings have been known to cause respiratory problems and liver damage.

Nesting Material:

Plain white unscented tissue provides a safe and inexpensive nesting material. Shred it into narrow strips and leave the rest to them as they build great whip cream castles out of tissue paper! A wooden nesting box provides the gerbils privacy and a nice place to sleep. Or a small heavy cardboard box may be used, though they will eventually chew it up.

WARNING: Commercial nesting material looks soft and fluffy, but it is very dangerous to gerbils. They can become entangled in it

amputating a foot, or if eaten it may later cause a blockage. Never give your gerbils anything containing strings or fibers.

Water:

Each tank/cage will need it's own water bottle. Gerbils require clean, fresh water at all times. If you are using an aquarium you will need to purchase a special bottle holder/shield. Be sure that the tip of the water bottle is well above the bedding or it will drain out.

Food:

A good premixed gerbil food is recommended. It is easy to get the right combination of protein, minerals, vitamins, and bulk. A non-breeding gerbil needs 12% protein and 7% fat.



Toys and Exercise:

Gerbils are active and need an entertaining environment. Let your imagination guide you. There are hundreds of ways to create fun for your gerbils. Wooden play/chew toys can be found in pet stores in the shape of cheese wedges or treasure chests. Gerbils love cardboard, especially paper towel and toilet tissue rolls to run through and gnaw up.

Some gerbils enjoy wheels, however cover the outside with heavy masking tape (nothing with embedded threads). Then coat the inside with bedding so the gerbil's feet don't stick.

WARNING: A gerbil's tail can get caught in an open slat wheel and be amputated. And never hold or pull the tail as it could break off.

