



NORFOLK INDUSTRIES
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE
Part of *Independence Matters*

Guide to Mongolian Gerbils

Latin Name - Meriones Unguiculatus

Scientific Order - Rodentia

Average Adult Size – 4-5 inches long

Average Life Span – up to 5 years

Diet – Herbivores



General Information

There are several different breeds of gerbils, but Mongolian Gerbils are the most common as pets. Mongolian Gerbils were first introduced as pets in 1964.

Gerbils are popular as pets as they are generally not aggressive and rarely bite unless provoked or stressed. They are social and so enjoy the company of humans and other gerbils.

They also conserve body fluids by producing dry waste pellets which have little odour.

Behaviour

Gerbils are social animals in the wild and tend to live in small groups. Being inquisitive, they like to burrow and play in tubes and boxes.

They rely on their sense of smell to identify other members of their clan, and so it is important to use a slit tank method if introducing gerbils from other litters to the group.

Gerbils are known to attack and often kill those carrying an unfamiliar scent.



Equipment Required



- Cage/habitat – Ideally an aquarium as gerbils can get caught in cage bars. Must have secure top, and well ventilated. The habitat must allow for a deep layer of sawdust for gerbils to dig and tunnel into.
- Animal House – such as Norfolk Industries Small Animal house, see product details at <https://www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/animal-house/animal-houses/>



- Water bottle which attaches to the side of the aquarium.
- Food bowl – Preferably a weighted bowl so that this cannot be easily tipped over.
- High quality gerbil food – Such as nuggets or pellets.
- Bedding materials – such as Norfolk Industries recycled shredded paper bedding -www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/recycled-pet-bedding/newspaper-bedding/



or paper flakes bedding -

www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/recycled-pet-bedding/flaked-paper-bedding/



or cotton bedding - www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/fibre-pet-bedding/white-cotton-bedding/



- Exercise wheel – smooth wheel so that small feet cannot get caught in between rungs.
- Wooden chews – designed with gerbils in mind, such as the apple twigs found in our small animal house.
- Mineral chew – such as the mineral chew found in our small animal house.
- Tubes or nests – such as Norfolk Industries ‘Chewy’ tubes complete with bedding, to provide hideaway place and help with chewing ability. See product details at www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/nesting-tubes/



- Screwed up newspapers for hideaway places.

Maintenance Tasks



- Ensure that fresh food and water are provided daily. Limit the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables provided (leafy greens lettuce, spinach, or carrots, avoid high sugar fruits).
- Clean out any leftover foods each day to avoid smells.
- Provide treats designed for gerbils only 2 -3 times per week.
- Clean out the aquarium/habitat at least once a week and fully wash out. Allow to fully dry before reintroducing the gerbils.
- Provide clean bedding materials when cleaning out or more often if necessary.

Grooming and Hygiene

- Gerbils are clean animals and occasionally like a dust bath. They can also be spot cleaned with unscented wet wipes if needed. Fur can be brushed with a soft brush.
- Long teeth or nails may need trimming and this is best carried out by a veterinarian.

General Health Conditions

- Diarrhoea – loose stool caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean habitat or other illness. Treated by consulting veterinarian to determine cause and treatment.
- Malocclusion (overgrown teeth) - Treated by consulting veterinarian to trim teeth.
- Mites – losing patches of hair, scratching – Treated by consulting veterinarian for treatment.
- Tumors – abnormal lumps – Treated by consulting with veterinarian.



General Care Information

Holding your gerbil – It is important that you never hold your gerbil by its tail, as it can break off. Pick the gerbil up gently, do not grab as they can bite, and are more likely to do so if surprised. Cup them in the palm of your hand. If you do this regularly, they will get used to being handled and will be less likely to panic and bite.



Temperature – The aquarium/habitat should be kept at room temperature. The aquarium/habitat should not be exposed to extremes of temperature, so ensure that it is not near direct sunlight or in a draught.



Washing Hands – Always ensure that you wash your hands after handling gerbils, or cleaning out their aquarium/habitat. Gerbils can carry infectious diseases. Pregnant women should not handle gerbils due to this reason.

Information supplied by –



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NOT **DISABILITY**

