

## Gerbils On The Web

The American Gerbil Society

<http://www.agsgerbils.org>

eGerbil

<http://www.egerbil.com/>

The Mongolian Gerbil Forum

<http://gerbilforum.proboards.com>

The eGerbil Forum

<http://gerbilsuk.proboards.com>

## Caring For Your New Gerbils

*A Gerbil Care Primer*

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**Shooting Star Gerbils**

*A great start for a great life*

## What Your Gerbils Need

### GERBIL BASICS

Gerbils are small rodents from the deserts of Mongolia. Because they are desert animals, gerbils produce much less odor than other rodents.

Gerbils sleep and wake in turns throughout the day, and don't mind being woken from a nap for playtime.

They are very social animals, so it is best to keep gerbils in pairs, preferably same-gender siblings. Never mix two adult gerbils without a lengthy period of introduction using a split-tank arrangement.

### HOUSING

The best housing for gerbils is a simple glass tank, with a secure lid. Two gerbils will be comfortable in a 15-20 gallon tank.

Wire and plastic cages are not suitable for gerbils, as gerbils are natural diggers, and will kick bedding out through the bars. Gerbils will also rub their noses raw gnawing on the bars, and chew any plastic to pieces.

### BEDDING + NESTING MATERIAL

Gerbils need a good 6" of bedding in their tank, to enable normal digging behavior. Good bedding choices include Aspen shavings, Hemp, and recycled paper beddings like EcoBedding. There is an ongoing debate over whether Pine shavings are dangerous to small animals; if you choose to use Pine, heat-treated Pine is best. Avoid Cedar shavings, as they are definitely harmful to gerbils.

You should give your gerbils plain white toilet tissue or paper towels to build nests with. They also enjoy Timothy Hay. Avoid commercial nesting "fluff" and other materials with strings or fibers, as they are dangerous if accidentally ingested.

### TOYS AND EXERCISE

Gerbils love all sorts of wooden toys, and anything made of cardboard. You can look in the small animal, bird, and reptile sections of your local petstore for suitable toys, or even make your own!

If you choose to give your gerbils an exercise wheel, make sure it has either a mesh or a solid running surface. Gerbils' delicate tails and legs can get trapped and broken in a barred wheel.

### FOOD AND WATER

Gerbils will do well on most commercial gerbil food mixes. Ideally, the protein content should be about 12% and the fat content should be 6-8%. Older gerbils (over 2 years) need a mix with 10-11% protein and 3-5% fat. Each gerbil should get 10-15 grams (about a tablespoon) of food a day.

Although gerbils do not drink much they need to have access to fresh water at all times. A water bottle is best, as they will quickly soil or knock over a dish. Unless your water bottle is glass, you will need a metal bottle guard to keep the gerbils from chewing a hole in the bottle.

### HANDLING

Let your gerbils get used to their new home for about two days before handling them.

To pick up a gerbil, use your cupped hands to scoop it up from below. Do not approach suddenly from above, or grab the gerbil around the middle.

Never pick a gerbil up by the tail. The skin of the tail is fragile, and can come off if pulled.