

Mice are great pets that are social, active and alert. They are relatively straight forward to look after and a popular little friend.

Use this checklist to make sure that a mouse is right for you and your family:

- I have the appropriate housing for this pet
- I understand that male and female mice should not be housed together
- I can provide daily supervised time for my mouse
- I can commit to taking appropriate care for my mouse
- An adult can provide primary care for this pet.

Average size: 7.5cm

Life span: Up to 2 years

FEEDING

A high quality mouse-specific food should make up 90% of your mouse's diet. A small amount of fruit and vegetables should also be a daily part of your mouse's diet.

They love food such as pears, strawberries, dates, raisins, apples, peas, broccoli, bananas, sprouts and carrots. Remember to keep vegetable and fruit quantities small so as not to upset their stomachs and introduce them one at a time.

There are a variety of treats available for your mouse and these should not exceed 10% of the total food intake. Food and water should always be available, and fruits and vegetables not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

Do not feed chocolate, cabbage, corn, sugary or junk foods, peanuts, uncooked beans, onions, alcohol or caffeine as these can cause serious medical problems. We recommend a solid food bowl to prevent spillage and chewing damage.

WATER

Fresh clean water should always be available and changed every day. It is best to use a hanging water bottle rather than a shallow bowl as they can get messy and are very easily tipped over. Female mice do well together, male mice can live together but only if they have been introduced when they are both at a very young age.

HOUSING

Mice are very flexible animals and can acclimatise well to normal indoor temperatures. It is important though that your mouse's habitat is not in direct sunlight, draughts or places of extreme temperature change.

Your mouse's cage should be made of glass, plastic or metal and it must be well ventilated but escape proof – they can be great jumpers. It is best to provide the largest habitat you can afford.

They also need:

- ▶ A hiding place filled with nesting material for sleeping
- ▶ An exercise wheel
- ▶ A climbing area – either a ladder, in-built structure in the cage or a chemical free tree branch
- ▶ Tunnels for play and hiding

Bedding should be spread on the bottom of the cage approximately 4cm deep. The best bedding materials to use are aspen bedding, pelleted products or shredded ink free paper. Cedar or pine shavings are not recommended as these can cause respiratory problems.

Make sure that your bedding is dry, as dusty or damp bedding material can promote respiratory problems.

Female mice do well together, male mice can live together but only if they have been introduced when they are both at a very young age. Adult male will fight if introduced at an older age. Males and females should not be housed together.

Mice cannot be housed with other types of small animals.

HIDING PLACE / HOUSE

Your mouse cage needs to have a nesting area and room to exercise. When they are out of their cage make sure that the area is escape proof and free of other pets. Safe chew toys are essential for preventing health problems caused by overgrown teeth.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE

Remove the wet spots daily and replace the entire bedding once or twice weekly. Clean the entire cage with hot water and leave to dry completely before putting the bedding material and your mouse back in. Clean the food and water vessels daily in hot water.

BEHAVIOUR & EXERCISE

Mice are active little creatures that need exercise. Mouse wheels, balls and ladders make excellent gymnasiums. Daily time out of their cage with you will also help in the exercise stakes. In the wild, mice are naturally inquisitive and active animals so simulating that level of exercise is important.

Mice are nocturnal and tend to be more active at night. You may hear them on their exercise wheels in the small hours. They are easily startled so providing hiding places in their enclosures will make them feel more secure.

HANDLE WITH CARE

Mice are fragile and need to be handled with care. Pick up your mouse using your cupped hand and make sure that they are not going to slip out. Never pick up a mouse by its tail.

To get them used to being handled, offer treats from your hand and speak to them gently. Once they become accustomed to you they will be more willing to interact. When exercising outside of the cage make sure that the area is escape proof and safe.

Like all rodents their incisor teeth grow continuously and it is essential that they always have plenty of chew sticks available to gnaw on. Overgrown teeth can cause serious health problems and need to be assessed by your veterinarian.

GROOMING

Mice are naturally clean animals and do a great deal of self grooming. Males tend to have a stronger odour than females. They don't require bathing and in fact generally aren't fond of water.



HYGIENE

Always wash your hands before and after handling your mouse or its cage contents. Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should ask their doctor before considering a mouse as a pet.

The signs of a healthy mouse are:

- ▶ Active, alert and sociable
- ▶ Healthy fur
- ▶ Clear bright eyes
- ▶ Eats and drinks regularly
- ▶ Communicates by squeaking
- ▶ Walks normally

The signs of an unhealthy mouse are:

- ▶ Diarrhoea or a dirty bottom
- ▶ Overgrown teeth
- ▶ Weight loss
- ▶ Skin lesions
- ▶ Abnormal hair loss
- ▶ Lethargy
- ▶ Eye or nasal discharge

If you notice any of these signs please contact your veterinarian immediately.

Recommended supplies

- ▶ Good sized cage
- ▶ High quality food
- ▶ Water bottle
- ▶ Bedding
- ▶ Wheel / exercise toy
- ▶ Chew proof food bowl
- ▶ Chew toys & treat sticks
- ▶ Books about care
- ▶ Ladder or climbing furniture

