

Your New Gerbil

– a guide to its care.

Congratulations on the new addition to your family. This is an exciting time for everyone and we hope that you will have many happy years together. This handout covers some of the basic facts about keeping a gerbil. Please read it carefully; if you have any further questions ask a member of staff.

Suggested Feeding Guidelines

Gerbils should have a balanced diet made up from a basic pet shop gerbil mix. This can be supplemented with fresh items like tomatoes, carrots or grapes. Gerbils like to bury things so instead of a food bowl it is sometimes a better idea to simply spread some food around the tank to allow them to forage for their food.

Housing and Handling

Although gerbils live naturally in colonies, they can also be very territorial and hence fight. Therefore in the confined space of an aquarium it is probably best to keep a gerbil on its own. They are mainly nocturnal animals but do become active for short periods during the day. They live between three to five years.

Gerbils are natural diggers and also like to jump and climb so are best kept in aquariums. A close fitting lid allowing good ventilation and security is essential. For bedding materials use shredded paper or hay. Do not use cotton wool, shredded J-cloths or similar materials as they can get caught around the feet and act like a snare causing great harm.

A sandbox with 2-3 cm deep chinchilla sand for your gerbil to bath in each day is important to avoid skin problems. Additionally, toilet roll tubes make great play things for gerbils!

The correct way to handle a gerbil is to hold the animal at the base of its tail, (nearest the body), between thumb and forefinger and then place it on the palm of your other hand for support.

Do not pick up a gerbil by its tail without supporting the rest of its body as this will stress it and make it more likely to bite or injure itself. Because of this, gerbils may not be suitable pets for very young children.

Handle your pet every day so it gets used to human contact.

Sexing Gerbils

Sexing gerbils is important if you do decide to keep more than one. Luckily it is quite easy and is a matter of judging the distance between the genital and the anus. This distance is greater in males so it is best to have at least two animals to compare and contrast before making your mind up. It is always advisable to have this checked out ASAP by a vet.

Dental Care

Gerbils' incisor teeth grow throughout life, therefore it is important that an array of chewing toys is available to help wear the teeth down. You should check your gerbil's front teeth from time to time to ensure they do not become overgrown and cause ulceration of the lips.

Emergency Service

Parkvets has a vet on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In the event of an emergency, day or night, you should always telephone your usual Parkvets clinic and you will be given the appropriate information on what to do. Alternatively, call the emergency number 020 8300 8111

And Finally

We hope that you will have lots of fun and pleasure from your gerbil over the coming years. We trust he or she will enjoy good health and to help achieve this we recommend a health review with one of our vets each year.

Should you need further advice about the health or welfare of your gerbil then please contact us at the practice.

Special Offer for Ruxley Manor Garden Centre Customers

For your peace of mind Parkvets have teamed up with Ruxley Manor Garden Centre to offer you a 10% discount on your gerbil's first health check up. Visit our website at www.parkvets.com to find a Parkvets clinic near you.

You should obtain a voucher from Ruxley Manor Garden Centre and present it plus your receipt to Parkvets to claim your discount.



RUXLEY MANOR
GARDEN CENTRE

Parkvets

Parkvets

Veterinary Hospital (020) 8300 8111

Belvedere (020) 8311 5250

Bexley (01322) 553456

Eltham (020) 8859 7914

Longfield (01474) 703377

Mottingham (020) 8857 2100

Swanley (01322) 665916