



GERBILS

All the Gerbils found in Paradise Pet Centre have been locally raised and are typically 7-8 weeks old when they are ready for sale. Gerbils can be kept in colonies as long as they are from the same litter and purchased at the same time. There is a chance of aggression if they are mixed after one has a chance to set up territory in a cage. When everyone is put in a new cage there is no territory to defend so they tend to get along better. Gerbils are also very clean and don't smell bad. Naturally Gerbils come from a very dry environment so they actually don't have as many digestive movements as Hamsters. The life expectancy of a healthy Gerbil is 2-4 years.

BEHAVIOR

Gerbils are Diurnal so they are up during the day and sleep at night. This makes them a more interactive pet than a Hamster because you can actually watch them build their nest, store food, and exercise. Gerbils are naturally a burrowing animal so they will build a big nest out of the

shavings and hoard food somewhere in the cage. These critters mostly expel energy by chewing, digging, and they will run on a wheel. There is a lot of fur and loose skin on the tail of a Gerbil and this will slide right off the bone if it gets caught by something, so it is important to make sure not to pick them up by this. If the skin does get removed it will expose a bloody bone which will scab than normally fall off. Breeding age is at about 9-10 weeks of age but Gerbils are monogamous so once they breed it is typically only with that one partner. They can have up to 5-6 litters a year with 1-6 babies per litter and they will usually take really good care of them. Do not touch the babies or there will be transfer of odor and the parents will not take care of them anymore or eat them.

CAGE SET UP

A basic cage set up will give enough room for a nest, food storage, bathroom, exercise, food and water and things to chew on. There are a variety of substrates available for small animals but in Paradise Pet Centre we use Spruce wood shavings. Some other choices are Pine shavings, Pine with Chlorophyll shavings, Shredded Aspen, Carefresh, and Corn Cob. Cedar shavings should not be used for this size of animal and could prove toxic if offered. Because Gerbils are burrowing animals Hamster Fluff should be offered for them to make their nest out of, it is a very good conductor of heat and will keep them nice and warm. Some Gerbils can be litter box trained and this would be done the same way as with Hamsters, but most of them will just go where ever. During the day Gerbils are very active chewing, digging and running on their wheel. Because of their habit of chewing a metal wheel is recommended. Fresh food should be offered regularly because it will get stored somewhere in the cage, Gerbils don't over eat. A water bottle will keep the water free of debris and is the most sanitary way to offer water. Gerbils will chew on basically anything so offer a variety for them, plastic, wood, or food type chews. They have to chew

to keep their teeth short, if they over grow it can affect their feeding habits.



TYPES OF CAGES

There are 2 recommended types of cages:

- Wire Cage
- Glass Aquarium

Wire Cages are what Paradise Pet Centre uses in our display window for Hamsters and Gerbils. There is an epoxy coated wire top that clips into a plastic tray bottom. We use these cages because they are easy to clean and quite durable, if the epoxy is chewed off the wire top it is recommended to be replaced. The more chew toys that are offered the less the cage will be chewed and the water bottle can hang on the outside

of the cage. The bottom tray is only a couple inches deep so there will be debris kicked out of the cage regularly but is really easy to clean.

Glass Aquariums are the best thing to keep a Gerbil in. They will contain the mess, provide a less drafty home, and are very secure. There are also more sizes available in aquariums than in wire cages. There is no place for a glass aquarium to be chewed on, so if the enclosure is going to be kept close to where people are sleeping it will be less noisy.

NUTRITION

Gerbils are quite a hardy animal but when they are babies any kind of change in their diet can be very stressful. Depending on the breeder that we acquired them from, they would either be on a seed diet or a pellet diet. So when you are selling a Gerbil check in the cage where it came from to see what food to recommend. If on a seed diet it will be Paradise Pet Centre brand bulk Hamster food, and if it is on a pellet diet it will be Living World Extruded Pellets. The Gerbil will have to go home with the same food it is on in the store or the sale will be refused. If you are in a situation where the customer refuses to purchase and small bag of food then get your manager to talk with them. If the diet is changed it will cause an upset in the digestive tract and can be fatal in some cases. After the initial 3-4 weeks settle in period, fresh fruits and veggies can be offered in very small quantities. The foods offered at Paradise Pet Centre are premium quality and complete diets so the fruit and veggie portions are considered treats. Offering a salt lick in the cage is always a good idea because it will prevent nibbling when the Gerbils are being handled. Gerbils are more friendly than Hamsters but when a humans hand sweats we secrete salt which tastes really good to rodents. If they get their daily intake of salt from a salt wheel that is offered in the cage there will be less chance of being bit when it comes time to hold them.

MAINTENANCE

It is best to clean the Gerbil cage at least once a week. Remove the Gerbil from the cage and place it in a Hamster Ball while cleaning, just make sure the area is safe for them to roll around in and no stairs to go down.

Remove the shavings from the cage and spray an enzyme based cleaner than let it sit for 30-60 seconds and wipe clean. Most animals are sensitive to chemical cleaners and they can be fatal if not rinsed properly, Urine Off is the safest cleaner we sell. It is made of a plant extract and could be consumed and still not hurt the animal. Any cage attachments and dishes should be cleaned at the same time, rinsed and dried. Once the cage is cleaned entirely then place fresh shavings, Hamster fluff, food and water, chew toys, and any other attachments back into the cage. Gerbils will do all the necessary grooming by themselves so there is no need for brushing or bathing.