

DEGU CARE

Degus originate from Chile where they live on the edge of the Andes in big communal burrows. They can be friendly engaging pets if trained correctly. Their teeth grow continuously throughout their life, so they must wear them down by eating hay and grass.

Longevity: 5 – 8 years

Sociability: Degus are social animals and are best kept in pairs or small groups.

Environment:

- Degus should be housed in large wire cages, with a high solid base covered with a deep layer of substrate to allow natural burrowing behaviour.
- The cage should be placed out of direct sunlight to avoid extremes of temperature.
- Suitable substrates include shredded paper or wood shavings (not sawdust)
- Within the cage, nest boxes, branches, shelves and a large solid wheel for exercise should be provided.
- A dust bath should be offered daily to keep the fur in good condition.
- The cage should be cleaned out at least once a week with a pet safe cleaner to help prevent disease.

Diet:

- Hay or grass is essential to maintain gastrointestinal & dental health and should make up most of the diet.
- Dried herbs and dried forage material such as that fed to chinchillas can also be offered in small quantities
- Commercial guinea pig or chinchilla diets can make up a small part of a degu's diet.
- Museli mixes should not be offered as these animals will repeatedly only eat some ingredients and their diet will be unbalanced
- Clean water must be given daily in a water bottle.



Preventative Healthcare:

To keep your pets happy and healthy we advise a yearly check up with your vet as medical problems are more easily treated if detected at an early stage – **you can register for automatic reminders.**

- Degus do not require any vaccinations
- Preventive parasite treatment is not recommended or necessary.
- Sexual maturity occurs between 3- 4 months of age. Male degus may be castrated from 3 months of age in order to reduce fighting, or prevent reproduction
- Female degus are not routinely spayed unless there is a concern about reproductive disease
- We recommend weighing your degus on a weekly basis at home to monitor for any signs of weight loss. The average weights are 170 – 300g with females being slightly heavier.
- Dental check ups are recommended every 3 – 6 months

Insurance:

We highly recommend that you take out a pet insurance policy. For a monthly fee your pet can receive the best treatment at an affordable cost. There is normally an excess to pay for each condition then after that costs are covered up to a set limit. Once you have the policy, please provide us with a copy of your insurance details. There are a lot of different companies and policies available and we suggest you contact a number of them for information- we have a leaflet advising what to look out for. Our advice is to choose a policy which provides cover for chronic illness for the life of your pet. If this policy is too much for you then the best cover you can afford will provide piece of mind in an accident or emergency.

Common health complaints:

The most common health issues in degus can be avoided if the diet is correct and obesity is avoided.

- Diabetes is common because of diets containing fruit and nuts and is linked to obesity in this species. It can be avoided by making sure the diet is correct and the degu does not become overweight.
- Liver disease associated with obesity
- Cataracts relating to obesity and diabetes
- Dental disease relating to too much commercial food and treats and not enough hay being eaten
- Diarrhoea from incorrect diet

