

CARE OF SMALL RODENTS - RATS, MICE, HAMSTERS, GERBILS, DEGUS

HOUSING: Cage designed specifically for the particular species, with multiple levels for climbing. Wire cage bottoms should be coated wire, not bare. The larger the cage, the better. These rodents are fairly tolerant of temperature changes, but are susceptible to heat stroke.

SUBSTRATE: Cedar and pine shavings have been found to cause liver damage and irritation to the respiratory tract of rodents. Aspen shavings, grass hays, recycled paper products, or shredded paper bedding is best. Bedding must be changed frequently as the ammonia from the urine is irritating to the rodent's respiratory tract. If it smells strong from the top of the cage, it needs to be replaced.

FEEDING: These rodents are omnivorous herbivores. Fiber is an important aspect of the diet. Feed a formulated rodent pellet-not mixes containing seeds. We carry Oxbow brand Regal Rat and recommend it for all these species. Timothy or other grass hay (whole hay, not cubes or blocks) may be offered for additional fiber and behavioral enrichment. Alfalfa hay is not recommended. Small amounts of fresh greens, veggies and fruit may be offered. Other people foods in treat-sized quantities are ok, toxicity concerns are the same as for dogs (ie, chocolate).

VETERINARY CARE: We recommend a wellness exam at the time of purchase/adoption, then exams every six months. The back teeth of rodents need to be checked regularly for overgrowth. Bloodwork should be done sometime in the first 18 months of age to obtain a normal database, then annually from the age of three to screen for the development of age-related diseases. Always contact your rodent's veterinarian with questions and concerns-this is a better source for information than pet stores or the internet.