

# Caring for your Gerbil

**beaphar®**

Gerbils are fascinating to watch, and have a fast and energetic nature. Mainly nocturnal, but still active throughout the day, they make great pets for older children. Wild gerbils live in desert conditions so naturally conserve food and water, meaning they produce little waste so owners often find them cleaner and less smelly than other rodents. Captive gerbils have a lifespan of up to 4 years (or longer), so make ideal long-term family pets.

## FIVE WELFARE NEEDS

### Being a responsible gerbil owner:

As an owner, it's your responsibility to provide your pet with the following so they live a fulfilled, happy and healthy life:



Companionship



Behaviour



Nutrition



Healthcare



Housing &  
environment



### Friends for life

Gerbils are very sociable and live in large groups in the wild, so in captivity they are best kept in same-sex pairs or small groups. It's best to get your gerbils at the same time; introducing an older or new gerbil to an existing group is likely to cause fighting.

Bonding with your gerbil is very important and will help them get used to being gently handled. This makes it much easier when giving them a health check. To tame your gerbils, begin by putting your hand inside the enclosure and allowing them to sniff it (it can help to rub your hand on some of the substrate first). Once they're used to this, you can begin to gently stroke them. Then, you can slowly move on to picking them up and holding them. Never pick your gerbil up by its tail as this can cause serious damage; always use two hands and scoop them up.



### Your gerbils' perfect home

The best home for your gerbils is a gerbilarium, which is similar to a large fish tank with a wire cage top. This allows your gerbils to burrow and build tunnels in the tank area, as they would in the wild, with space for them to eat and drink in the cage area. The tank area should be filled with dust-extracted wood shavings, organic soil or peat. The wood shavings allow gerbils to burrow happily, but isn't too dusty (which can cause respiratory problems and irritate their eyes). Additionally, your gerbils need shelters with multiple entrances and exits where they can hide; paper-based nesting material is ideal for this.

Because gerbils produce less waste than other rodents, cleaning and disinfecting once every two or three weeks is usually suitable (although you may wish to clean urine and faeces away more often).



### Your gerbils' behavioural needs

Alongside burrowing, you can give your gerbils other enrichment activities, such as wooden toys for chewing (which also helps wear down their teeth), tunnels, and leave food around the gerbilarium to encourage natural foraging behaviour. Empty toilet roll tubes are great too as they can play with them and chew them.

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## Feeding a healthy diet

Your gerbils' diet needs to consist mostly of a commercial gerbil food. Gerbils are susceptible to digestive upsets and diarrhoea if they eat too much fat or carbohydrates, so choosing a good quality gerbil food ensures they're getting the correct balance of nutrients. Pelleted food is recommended over muesli-style food; this helps prevent selective feeding. It's important to feed your gerbils the correct amount of food for their age and weight to help avoid obesity. We recommend using a ceramic bowl, as your gerbils are less likely to knock it over.

Alongside this, you can feed your gerbils treats such as pumpkin seeds. Sunflower seeds can be given but are high in fat and may upset your gerbils' tummy, so should be given no more than once a week. Always keep fresh drinking water available.



## Looking after your gerbils' health

Regularly handling your gerbils makes giving them a health check easier, meaning you're more likely to spot any problems. Check their eyes, ears, nose and mouth, and keep a look out for any changes in eating, drinking or toileting. Gerbils can be prone to mites, so look out for any signs of scratching or irritation on their skin. If you ever have any concerns about your gerbils' health, contact your vet for further advice. Gerbils should be given access to a dust bath once a week. A dust bath helps keep their skin and fur clean, with specific rodent sand available in pet shops.

## Gerbil Products

**FIVE  
MUST  
HAVES**



### Beaphar Deep Clean Disinfectant for Small Animal Housing

- Long-lasting protection, kills bacteria and viruses
- Ideal for gerbilariums



### Beaphar Cage Fresh Granules

- Contains friendly microbes that break down odours
- Ideal for gerbilariums and toilet areas



### Beaphar CARE+® Gerbil/Mouse

- Nutritionally balanced, pellet food
- With added vitamins and prebiotics



### Beaphar Dental Easy Treat

- Supports the natural wearing of teeth
- With a high fibre content and added vitamins

## Beaphar Anti-Parasite Spot On for golden hamsters and gerbils

- Kills lice, fleas, mites and roundworms for up to 4 weeks
- Vet strength medicine



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Use medicines responsibly (noah.co.uk)