



DEGU CARE

Degus originate from Chile where they live on the edge of the Andes in big communal burrows. They can be friendly docile pets and may live between 6-9 years if looked after correctly. Their teeth grow continuously throughout their life, so they must wear them down by eating hay and grass.

ACCOMMODATION

- 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 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 to help prevent disease.

COMPANIONS

- Degus are social animals, and are best kept in pairs or small groups.

WHAT TO FEED

- Hay or grass is essential to maintain gastrointestinal & dental health and should make up most of the diet.
- Fresh vegetables and small amounts of fruit (not fruit high in simple sugar) should be fed daily.

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- Commercial chinchilla or other rodent diets can make up a small part of a degu's diet. However, as degus can be highly selective feeders, complete pelleted diets are preferable to muesli mixes as they help to ensure that the animal receives a balanced diet.
- Clean water must be given daily in a water bottle.

VACCINATIONS

- No routine vaccinations are currently recommended for degus

NEUTERING

- Male degus may be castrated in order to reduce fighting, or prevent reproduction

PARASITES

- No routine parasite prevention is currently recommended for degus

SIGNS OF ILL HEALTH

- As degus are a prey species they will hide disease, so the first time you see any signs you must act quickly.
- A healthy degu will be bright and alert with clear open eyes, ears and nostrils. Your degu should also be keen to eat and drink, and pass faeces regularly.
- It is important to become familiar with your animal's normal appearance, movement and behaviour, in order that signs of illness can be noticed at an early stage.
- You should look out for any changes in appetite or faeces passed, as well as changes in weight, behaviour, coat condition or breathing. Other signs of illness include discharges from the eyes, nose or mouth
- Dental disease – degus need a high fibre diet as their constantly growing teeth need to be worn down in order to avoid dental problems. If your degu is losing weight, drooling, eating less or passing less faeces than normal, dental disease should be suspected and a thorough dental examination should be carried out (often under general anaesthetic).
- Bleeding or discharges from anywhere should be assessed by your vet.
- Limping, change in grooming behaviour or wounds should be assessed by your vet.
- If you have any concerns contact your vet as soon as possible.