



Our Guide to



Degus

What's Awesome About Degus



Degus are fascinating little creatures, and make busy and active pets. Unlike chinchillas, degus are active during the day and, like us, sleep at night. Originally from Chile, where they live in large colonies, degus started to become more common as domestic pets around 20 years ago. At first, they were only available in their natural agouti colouring, but selective breeding has now led to variegated and black coats.

They are very communicative critters and have an elaborate vocal repertoire comprising of 15 different vocal sounds, which they use to communicate with their herd mates. They can create strong bonds with their human care givers, and early socialisation with people is important, but it is possible to form bonds with adults.



Things to Think About

Before choosing degus as pets, there are a number of very important factors to consider before adding them to the family. Degus are a long term commitment with a life-span of between 8-10 years, their long-term care needs to be carefully considered before committing to them.

Degus are very active and need a large cage to provide plenty of space to run around, meaning they will take up a significant space in your home. Trying to confine them to small cages leads to boredom, depression and stereotypical behaviours, such as bar biting and over grooming.

They are also quite messy animals, flinging bedding and droppings out of their cages, and the dust required to keep their fur in good condition gets everywhere. They may not be suitable for some allergy sufferers, with their need for dust baths.



Diet

Degus have very specific dietary needs and it's vitally important we provide them with suitable foods. Unable to produce insulin, and an inability to process fats, means they require a sugar and fat free diet. Failure to stick to this strict regime will lead to diabetes and hepatic steatosis (fatty liver disease).



A commercial pellet specifically designed for degus should be offered once a day, we recommend Science Selective.



A good quality long stranded hay needs to be provided at all times and should make up the bulk of their diet.



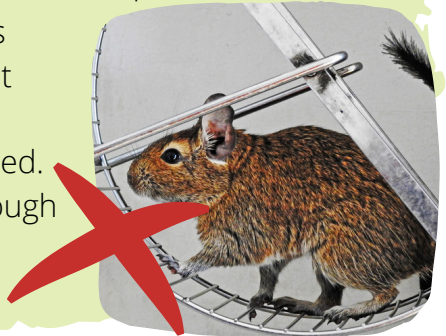
For a bit of variety and a treat you can add dried forage such as plantain, and small amounts of dried flowers.



Willow balls and apple tree sticks are also enjoyed by degus and provide a healthy snack.

Enrichment

Degus love to leap and enjoy housing which provides lots of little ledges. They also love to chew and should be provided with lots of safe wooden accessories to fulfil their desire to gnaw. Degus love wheels, but it is important to pick a suitable solid wheel of the correct size and it is virtually impossible to find these in pet shops. Solid wheels are important to prevent feet and tails becoming trapped. We recommend TickTac Wheels, although expensive they are well worth the investment.



Housing



Degus need lots of space and sadly suitable housing options are limited. They require a minimum of 500,000 cubic cm.

To work out the cubic cm of any cage, simply multiply the length, width and height. Cages should have a minimum width of 80cm and a minimum depth of 50cm. Ensure you only choose an all metal cage, degus easily chew through plastic and escape! Cages should be placed away from direct sunlight, radiators and drafts.

Other Important Things



Dust Baths - Degus need daily access to dust baths to keep their coats in good condition.

Company - As social animals degus need company of their own kind. They can be very difficult to introduce as adults and this has to be done very slowly. Same sex litter pairs make the best companions, but you can also neuter males to live with females.



Vet Care - Degus are classed as exotics within the veterinary industry and therefore owners need to carefully select a suitable vet able to treat them. We recommend Origin Vets for West Wales and Origin Vets Clinic for South Wales.