

TAKING CARE OF SMALL MAMMALS



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Foreword

Have you been thinking of bringing a new pet into your family? If you have, do you realize that it does not have to be something big like a dog? You can also have the option of going with a smaller mammal. A few examples would be a gerbil or a hamster or maybe even a rabbit or a rat.

One common reason people choose smaller mammals as a pet is if they are restricted with the amount of space they have for a pet. A prime example would be something living in a small apartment in the inner city. Chances are that there would not be enough room in the apartment for a dog to be comfortable and have room to play. On top of that, it can be a real hassle walking a dog up and down stairs to take them outside and some dogs will require training to be able to walk in the city without problems. Training can be costly and the entire experience of having a dog in a small apartment can be full of hassles so in this situation it is probably better to go with a smaller pet.

If your children have been begging you for a pet you might want to start out with a smaller animal. Fish can be boring and children can lose their interest and forget about them in no time. At the same time, a dog can be way too much responsibility for a child, especially if they are young and it is their first pet. The perfect option for a child as their first pet would be an animal such as a hamster or gerbil.

Taking Care Of Small Mammals

Chapter 1:

Small Mammal Care Basics

Synopsis

While smaller mammals are still mammals, they require different care than animals that you may be used to caring for such as a dog or a cat. The care is actually significantly easier and is not required nearly as much but there are still things that need to be done on a regular basis. You need to understand that as a pet owner it is your responsibility to make sure that your pet is getting all of the care it needs to be healthy and happy. After all, the pet did not choose you, you chose it.

There are some basic guidelines for caring for small mammals that are almost universal for hamsters, gerbils, mice, rats, and rabbits. One of the basic essentials of course would be a cage because unlike a dog, smaller mammals may end up lost in your house somewhere if they are not secured. I'm sure you have or at least know someone who has lost their cat in the house before. Okay, now think about trying to find a hamster in the same house.

The following chapter will go over the basics of caring for small mammals and will provide you with some essential information that will ensure that your little critter stays happy and healthy.

The following chapter of this book will go over the basics of caring for your small mammal and the importance of doing so.

The Basics

In order to consider acquiring a small mammal as a pet, the potential owner must first be well equipped with all the necessary knowledge to help make the whole experience an enjoyable and stress free one. Some of the elements that should be considered are quite obvious while others may seem insignificant at the time but are equally important to the overall equation.

The following are some of the elements to ponder on before actually making the final choice to acquire a small mammal as a pet:

- Small mammals usually require quiet surrounding so as not to startle them in their already seemingly huge surroundings. Therefore, being aware of all the important aspects that contribute to an ideal living space for the pet would be a good start for the pet. The pet's comfort and safety should be the priority when deciding on the living conditions it will eventually be placed in.
- Another element to consider in the care of the small mammal pet is the food and nutritional intake or program suitable for the pet. Being able to prepare these meals according to the recommended needs of the animal is very important as the small mammal pet will be entirely dependent on the owner to provide all its diet needs. As stated before it is the owner's responsibility to keep the animal healthy. As stated before, the animal did not choose you, you chose it!
- Time set aside to play and interact with the pet is also something to consider as no pets should ever be left alone and unattended for long

periods of time. This will be stressful to the pet and eventually cost the pet to deteriorate as it feels the loneliness becoming more overwhelming. If the potential owner has a very busy schedule and even worse is almost never at home it would be a rather selfish idea to acquire a pet.

- Another important thing to consider is putting a way for the small mammal to exercise into the animals future home. It is important that you put some type of wheel that they can run on in their cage so that they may exercise. This will also help to keep them more quiet while they are in their cage because they will have a way to burn off energy.
- Smaller mammals need to keep their teeth trimmed down. It is important that you put some type of wood block or something in their cage so that they may chew on it and keep their teeth healthy. Besides keeping their teeth healthy, you will notice that if they have a block to chew on they no longer chew on the cage.
- Another important thing is that you do not leave the animal in the cage constantly. Even though you may see it as just a hamster or a rabbit, it still needs to come out of the cage and be able to roam freely around the house; of course you need to supervise your pet while it roams.

- Another thing you may want to consider is getting two of the same type of small mammals. If you do not want the animals to breed it is advised that you get two males or two females. Your small mammal has a higher chance of being more comfortable and happy if it has a friend it can spend its time with. Then again some people may want to breed. There is actually a huge market for smaller mammals and a lot of money can be made breeding them. However, if you are planning on breeding your small mammals it is very important that you have the proper supplies and environment to deal with them in a healthy and safe manner.

All in all the basics of caring for smaller mammals are quite simple and most of them consist of common sense. Just remember to treat your small mammal as you would want to be treated. Even though it is a small animal it is still a living creature and deserves our upmost respect for its life.

Chapter 2:

Hamster/Gerbil Care

Synopsis

Hamsters and gerbils can be awesome pets and can offer a great deal of love and enjoyment to your family. Hamsters and gerbils are actually quite easy to care for and require very little maintenance. They are actually very quiet pets. Another added benefit of owning a hamster or gerbil is the fact that they take up hardly any space. As well, hamster and gerbils emit very low odor from themselves and their cages, as long as they are maintained properly. Pets such as ferrets can smell quite badly, even if their cage is cleaned on a regular basis so they may not be a wise idea for someone living in a smaller house or apartment.

Although hamsters and gerbils require very little maintenance and care there are still some basic necessities that they have just like everything else in life. You want to make sure that your pet is happy and that it lives out as many years with your family as possible. In order to do that you need to make sure you are taking proper care of your hamster or gerbil.

The following chapter will go over the importance of properly caring for your hamster or gerbil and will give you some tips on how to do so.

Properly Caring for Your Hamster/Gerbil

Proper care and diet plans are the essential elements that contribute to the happy and healthy existence of any pet. Hamsters and Gerbils are no exceptions to this need. So if you want your hamster or gerbil to live a long and happy life there are some basic guidelines that you are going to have to follow.

The following are some guidelines that can be used to successfully care for hamsters and gerbils:

- Doing some research to find the most suitable and complete nutritional foods to include in the diet plan of the hamster or gerbil is one of the first steps to embark upon. With proper diet plans in place the pet will at the very least be well fed. You need to pay attention to the weight and eating habits of your hamster or gerbil as well. You need to look for signs of weight loss or weight gain. If the hamster or gerbil is not eating or is eating all of its food but still losing weight, you should probably change their diet. At the same time, if your gerbil or hamster is putting on an excessive amount of weight, you should probably change their diet plan.
- Using hay in the cage or carrier that doubles as its dwelling place, the hamster or gerbil will be very happy to fine tune their natural foraging skills and this will keep the hamster or gerbil occupied and out of mischief and boredom. Choosing the variety of hay that contains immature seed heads would be an added treat for the pet. Another thing to consider is putting wood chips in the cage as well as wooden

blocks for the hamster or gerbil to chew on to maintain their teeth. As well, this will help to keep the hamster or gerbil from chewing on the cage which can be quite irritating.

- Surprisingly treats and veggies also make up good items to encourage interaction with these small mammal pets. However one should be careful when attempting to introduce such items as treats as too much can eventually create an obese pet and it can also give the creature a stomach ache when suddenly introduced into the hamster's or gerbil's diet. Therefore with any of these items introduced the pet owner must be sure it is done in very small portions and is maintained as a treat and not as part of the main diet plan. Plus, this will let the hamster or gerbil know that it is a special treat and they will appreciate it more. The treat will lose its value as a treat if it is given to the animal on a regular basis.
- Keeping the cages clean with fresh outlays of hay and other appropriate bedding material would also be a good idea, as the urine of these animals tends to be strong smelling. Also the pet owner should not be overly alarmed if the small mammal pet eats its own poop from time to time as this is a very natural behavior pattern.
- You should also seriously consider getting your hamster or gerbil an exercise wheel because these small little furry creatures have a great deal of energy. As well, exercise is important for the health of your hamster or gerbil and it will help keep them healthy and keep their weight under control.

- Let your pet out from time to time. Keeping the hamster or gerbil locked in the cage on a constant basis will begin to make the animal feel like a prisoner sooner or later. Let them out to explore sometimes, you can even get little balls that they can run on the floor in. These balls get rid of the fear of the animal getting lost or even worse, stepped on.

As you can see from the guidelines above, most of the care needed for a hamster or a gerbil is basically common sense. These small animals are awesome as pets, especially if it is your first pet or you are restricted with space for a pet. As long as you take proper care of your hamster or gerbil you are sure to have many happy years with them where you can create many lasting memories.

Chapter 3:

Rat Care

Synopsis

Pet rats need a place that they can consider to be their home. They are no different than you or I. They need a place of their own to feel secure. There are a few different things you can make into a home to put your pet rat into. Plastic and glass aquariums are great options when it comes to creating a home for your rat. Another option is a metal cage but the problem with those is the fact that the rat might try to chew on or through the bars on the cage. No matter what you choose to build the rat's home out of you need to make sure that it is comfortable and resembles where a rat would live in its natural habitat.

One important thing to remember when selecting where to put your rat's home is the fact that rats do not like to be in places where there is a draft. A calm still area is advised. Another thing to remember is the fact that rats do not like a lot of exposure to sunlight. Therefore, you probably do not want to put your rat's home directly in front of the window.

There are some other basic things of that you need to be aware of when you are thinking of choosing a rat for a pet. The following chapter will go over these basic guidelines and will provide you with some tips to help keep your rat happy and healthy.

Healthy Care for Your Rat

Rats are intelligent, loyal and playful fun loving little creatures, and it is really a treat to have one or two as a pet. However in order to have a successful relationship with this kind of pet, some measures need to be taken to keep the pet happy and healthy always.

The following are some ways basic ways the new pet owner can implement or use to ensure the pet rat is well cared for:

- Meeting the basic needs of the rat is very important and one of these would include its diet and nutritional needs. The owner should be able to source for the suitable food products at the nearest pet stores. Pet rats also respond well to treats and can often be quite greedy about them. Ideal treats would be foods that are not too rich and although yogurt and chocolate drops are among the more popular choices, giving the pet rat other alternative foods would be better. These alternatives should include a little fruits and vegetables but as these are usually given in its raw form and the amount should be minimal. It is important to remember a treat is not something that should be given on a regular basis as part of the rat's normal diet. This is especially true when it comes to unhealthy foods as well as raw fruits because an excess of these can cause the rat to develop and stomach ache and foul smelling feces.
- Keeping the rat living areas clean is another very important part of caring for the animal. This is important as the rat's urine and feces can have quite an overwhelmingly strong odor. However, cleaning

would also mean removing all smells the rat has become familiar with, thus the need to provide a warm old towel or rag for them to hide in until the cleaning chore is over. Allowing them to watch the process is also fun as rats are very intelligent animals and can easily understand the mechanics of what is going on. You can almost see a sense of appreciation in their eyes while they watch you clean their home. As well, letting the rat watch will make them feel more comfortable with the situation because it will help them understand what is going on better.

- It is important that you give your rats something to play with so that they can keep themselves entertained and not become a nuisance. It is advised that you get your pet rat some toys. Toys for rats can either be bought from your local pet store or can be made for close to nothing. One idea for a toy that you can make at home for your rat is a shoebox house inside of their cage. Just like children, rats like to play house, believe it or not! Another idea would be to tie a small piece of rope from one side of the cage to the other. Your rat will surely find hours of entertainment as it plays with its house and climbs back and forth on its rope.
- It is extremely important that you spend a lot of time with your rat, especially because rats are extremely intelligent creatures. They will soon feel lonely if they are left alone and this will eventually turn to madness. You have to make sure that you take time out of every day to spend with your rat and making them feel loved and as a part of the family.

- Another important you need to consider is the fact that rats breed quite rapidly. Therefore, if you have more than one rat you should be prepared to have baby rats sooner or later. Make sure that you take the proper measures to prevent this if it is not your attention and if you do plan on breeding make sure you are prepared to take care of the babies.

Rats are very cool animals but it is very important that you treat them appropriately. Do not be one of the people who believe the stereotype that all rats are dirty and should not be touched. It is true, some rats carry disease, but these are not rats sold at a pet store raised from birth, they are rats that have lived their whole life in trash cans. There is nothing unclean about a pet store or breeder raised rat. It is okay to pet your rat and show it affection, and the rat will appreciate it very much.

Chapter 4:

Mouse Care

Synopsis

Choosing to have a mouse as a pet has many different benefits. They can be extremely entertaining pets and can be very fun to watch and observe. Mice are also very good pets for interacting with and if you take good care of them and handle them on a regular basis they can become more of a companion than a pet. They are very intelligent and can learn new things quite quickly. A lot of people think that mice are just little stupid rodents, but that is not that case at all.

You need to understand that the care for your mouse is not going to be equivalent to that of caring for a small dog or cat. Mice have their own unique requirements in order to make sure that they remain happy and most of important of all healthy.

The following chapter will go over the basics of caring for your mouse and will provide you with some helpful tips that will ensure that your mouse lives and happy, healthy and long life.

Caring for Your Mouse

Having a pet mouse can be a very rewarding experience as they are funny little animals with endearing personalities. However, in order to be able to have a fun filled relationship with the pet mouse, the responsibility lies with the owner to take the best care possible of the pet.

The following are some areas to look into when it comes to addressing the issues involved in mouse care:

- Ideally a mouse should not be separated from its mother or litter any earlier than five weeks. Taking a pet mouse home before this ideal period will not only be stressful for the mouse but could also cause health issues for the mouse as up to this time the baby mouse is dependent on the mother's milk for survival. The sudden new surroundings, loneliness and new foods would be too overwhelming for the baby mouse to take in all at once at such a young age. Think about it, would you want to be separated from your mother before the age of five weeks old, or even at five weeks old?
- A happy and healthy mouse will have the characteristics of a smooth and clean coat, healthy pink colored ears and tail, bright eyes and an active demeanor. All this should be the focus of the new pet owner and maintaining this condition will take knowledge and effort. It will be time consuming and take some research but it is extremely important for the health and personality of the mouse. The mouse's health should be your first priority because as stated before, you chose the pet the pet did not choose you.

- The housing facilities provided for the mouse should also ideally follow the recommendations of experts or the advice of other mouse pet owners. Wooden boxes are a better option to choose, if it is available when compared to the normal wire cages found in pet shops. The housing should be free of condensation as it would add to the already cold weather which the mouse would already have to contend with. Providing the adequate amount of bedding may help to keep the mouse warm, while keeping its housing away from any drafty and damp conditions should also be considered.
- Just like with other pets, mice need to be entertained. It is important that you provide your mouse with toys that it can enjoy when it gets bored. You can either get your mouse's toys from the local pet shop or you can make your own. Toys for a mouse can be made out of nearly anything you can think of, they will surely find a way to play with it.
- Also, mice need exercise just like all other forms of animals. You may want to consider getting your mouse an exercise wheel or exercise ball that it can roam freely in within the house.
- You may want to consider buying your mouse a cage from a local pet shop that can be built on to. There are cages for small animals such as mice that have tubes that be added to the cage to make it bigger and you can even connect separate cages together.

- Mice need companions just like you and I. Therefore, you may want to consider getting your mouse a friend to play with and keep them company while you cannot because you are busy with other things.

Mice are truly awesome creatures and anybody who owns one as a pet should understand what remarkable creatures they really are. Mice can take some time and effort to care for but they require barely any space for their living area. With the proper amount of attention and care for your mouse you will surely experience many years of joy and entertainment.

Chapter 5:

Rabbit Care

Synopsis

Rabbits are really cool and can make great pets. A sad fact is though that rabbits are the third most surrendered or euthanized animal. This is due to the fact that people choose to get a rabbit as a pet before they fully understand how much responsibility is behind caring for a rabbit.

This chapter is to inform you of the basics of rabbit care so that you will be well informed before making the decision to bring a rabbit into your family.

Proper Care for Your Bunny

Caring for this furry animal would require the owner to be conscious of several different yet connective measures. These would include dietary needs, housing and bunny proofing the surroundings if the owner intends for the pet to have some level of freedom away from its cage some of the time.

The following is a guide that should be adopted if the new owner is keen on ensuring optimal happy conditions and care for the pet rabbit:

- An ideal meal for a rabbit should include a nice mix of hay, pellets and fresh vegetables. There should also be a bowl of fresh clean water for the rabbit always. Occasional treats can be given and these would include fresh fruits but in small quantities due to its high sugar content. Fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, bananas, pineapple and apples without the seeds would be an ideal choice. Hay should also be included for its good digestive and dental contributing elements.
- Getting the pet rabbit to use a little box for its toilet facilities is not as difficult or as unusual as most people would think. Rabbits tend to ease themselves in one or two very specific areas and this makes the job of identifying a suitable place to locate the litter box easy. Confining the pet rabbit to a specific room until the rabbit makes it a habit of using the litter box for its toilet is a great way of training the rabbit to use a litter box.

- If the pet owner intends to allow the pet rabbit to eventually roam freely around the house, some bunny proofing measures need to be taken. Rabbits are especially prone to biting on wires, thus keeping them either out of reach or inside flex tubing would help. Also providing the rabbit with lots of chewy toys and other distraction toys would help to keep it occupied and less destructive.

Chapter 6:

The Dangers of not caring for Your Small Mammal Correctly

Synopsis

If you plan on getting a small mammal as a pet it is extremely important that you understand how crucial it is that you make sure that the pet is getting the proper care. Small mammals health can deteriorate quite quickly under bad circumstances so it is vital that you are constantly inspecting your pet for any signs of sickness.

No matter how small the mammal is that you are keeping for a pet, it is still a living creature and deserves to be cared for properly. Then following chapter will go over some of the negative consequences that can come from not properly taking care of your small mammal.

Be Aware of the Danger!

To start with, most of these mammals are very small in size as its title so aptly describes them; this is often the biggest problem when it comes to having these mammals as pets. Their small size often makes interaction with them rather difficult and stressful and most pet owners simply settle for observing them from outside the cages or housing facilities. It is often difficult to even pick up such pet for a quick cuddle as besides the obvious small size, these animals are also very good at scurrying off quickly or wriggling out of the human hand's grasp.

Cleaning the housing for these pet can also be rather challenging and sometimes because it is considered a nuisance, some pet owner avoid doing it according to requirements. This will of course eventually affect the health of the small mammal pet and this will have even more unwanted negative connotations. The strong odors of the poop and urine of these pets can also be quite strong, and that is why there is a need to clean the housing accordingly to specific instructions provided by guides and other sources of information.

Giving these small mammal pets the correct foods and the ideal nutritional needs can also be a challenge. In most cases the pet would need fresh fruits and vegetables or grains and seeds of some sort. These should ideally never be left to rot in the housing as it would not only be unhealthy for the animal but would also be unhygienic. Overfeeding is also something to avoid as it will bring on the onset of obesity and other negative medical conditions.

These small animals are also not used to loud and bright places, thus the need to find cool, quiet and calm surroundings for their housing location.

Failure to do so will likely lead to large amounts of stress for the mammal and this will lead to unwanted behaviors.

Wrapping Up

Owning small mammals as pets can be very cool, entertaining, and cost-effective and has many conveniences. They may require care and attention but the happiness and joy they will surely bring you will make it well worth it.

It is very important that you understand the responsibility of these animals before you decide to get one as a pet. These small mammals are not just toys you can throw into a box and play with when you want to. They are living creatures and deserve our respect and love.

I hope that this book has been helpful for you and has cleared up some of the questions you have about owning and caring for a small mammal such as a rabbit, rat, mouse, gerbil or hamster.

I thank you for your time and I wish you the best of luck.