

# Mouse Care Information

Mice are playful and inquisitive animals. They live an average of two years. Mice have poor eyesight but good hearing and a good sense of smell. Mice are nocturnal. They prefer to sleep during the day, and they need attention and playtime in the evening. Mice are very social animals and need the companionship of their own species. It is unnatural for them to live alone. Mice should always be kept in at least same gender pairs. Mice enjoy grooming together, eating together, playing together, curling up to sleep together, and just being together. Female mice typically get along very well and tend to be easy to introduce to each other. Male mice sometimes get along very well, and sometimes they become aggressive with each other. If male mice become aggressive with each other, they must be separated and kept by themselves. Male mice also have a distinct scent that you should be okay with before you bring one home.

## HOUSING

There is no such thing as a habitat that is too big. Your mice will be spending a majority of their time in their habitat, so it should be as big as possible. It should be safe, roomy, comfortable and interesting. Mice are well kept in an aquarium. A ten gallon aquarium is adequate for a single mouse, but bigger is better. Ideally, the aquarium should be at least 24 inches long and 12 inches wide. It should have a secure, well-ventilated, coated wire, screen lid. It is better to have a long aquarium with more floor space than a tall aquarium with unused height. Mice can also (sometimes) be kept in wire cages. You must make sure the bars of the cage are spaced close enough together so that the mice can not escape. They can get out of some pretty small spaces!

Any levels in the habitat should be solid, not wire. Animals should never be made to stand on wire. Standing on wire is extremely painful and will cause wounds, sores, foot deformities and arthritis. Wire levels can be made safe by covering them with Magic Mats (available in pet stores), ceramic or vinyl tiles, cardboard (like cereal box cardboard) or other similar material.

Crittertrails, Habitrails, and/or SAM houses are not recommended. They are poorly made, break easily, do not provide proper ventilation, are very difficult to clean, are easy for mice to escape from and they harbor odor.

Clean your mouse's habitat at least once a week.

## BEDDING

Use Carefresh Bedding. It is the safest and healthiest bedding choice for your mice. It is made from recycled wood pulp and is available at most pet stores. Aspen bedding is a safe and acceptable second choice. Never use pine, cedar, sawdust, corn cob bedding, chlorophyll bedding or cat litter. Pine and cedar are **poisonous** to all animals! We usually have 50 Liter bags of Carefresh bedding available for purchase at our adoption events.

## HIDE-AWAY

Mice enjoy a cozy space for sleeping and relaxation. Provide a plastic igloo or other similar hide-away. If your mice chew on their plastic igloo, you need to remove it and provide a different hide-away. Wooden hide-aways are not recommended for mice. They can be difficult to clean and can hold odor. Use unscented toilet paper for nesting material. Do not use the commercial "fluff" from the store. It is unsafe. Commercial fluff can become wrapped around limbs and/or bind up in an animal's intestines if swallowed.

## WATER

Use an eight ounce (minimum) hanging water bottle that has an angled stainless steel sipper tube with a ball bearing in the spout. A glass water bottle is preferable, but a plastic water bottle is acceptable. Give your mice fresh water everyday. Filtered water is best.

## FOOD

Provide a ceramic food dish. Do not use plastic. It is important that mice have food available at

all times. It is difficult to find a quality commercial mix made specifically for mice. We suggest Innova Senior dog food and/or Supreme brand Reggie Rat food. We usually have both brands of food available for purchase at our adoption events. They are also available on-line, at some pet stores and some veterinary practices.

**Do not** use Kaytee, Hartz, L&M or Nutriphase products. They contain a controversial antioxidant preservative called Ethoxyquin -- which is linked to cancer, organ damage, birth defects and other serious health problems.

Give your mice small amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables everyday. Mice often enjoy apples, asparagus, avocado, bananas, basil, blueberries, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cherries (pitted), cranberries, cucumber, grapes, green pepper, kiwi, melon, okra, parsley, pears, peas, red pepper, spinach, squash and strawberries. Use organic produce whenever possible. Mice may also enjoy small quantities of whole oats, barley, millet, cooked brown rice, cooked pasta, whole grain bread, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, sunflower seeds, raw unsalted nuts, kashi cereal, tofu and hard boiled or scrambled egg. Use common sense when feeding your mice, and introduce new foods slowly. Avoid iceberg lettuce, citrus fruits, dried corn, raw beans, potato eyes, green potato, green parts of tomatoes, garlic, chocolate, dairy products, processed foods and any sugary or salty foods.

Do not give your mice a mineral or salt wheel. They are not necessary or healthy. Mineral and salt wheels are made with glue, and salt wheels are bleached. You can give your mice natural wood chews that have not been artificially colored and/or dried apple branches from apple trees that have not been sprayed with pesticides.

### **EXERCISE and PLAY**

Mice need and enjoy an exercise wheel. If you have multiple mice, you should consider providing multiple wheels. The exercise wheel should provide a solid running surface. Never use an exercise wheel with metal or plastic bars/rungs. Their feet, legs and/or tail can slip between the rungs, get caught and break. We recommend Wodent Wheels, Comfort Wheels and/or Silent Spinners for mice. All of the wheels are available on-line, and Comfort Wheels and Silent Spinners can be found in most pet stores. Mice need time out of their habitat everyday. You can use a large Rubbermaid tub as a playpen. Mice can easily get out of the fence-type playpens. Mice are very playful and inquisitive, and busy mice are happy mice. They like to climb, hide, jump and explore. Mice enjoy tubes, tunnels, boxes, bridges, ladders, ropes, bird toys and objects to climb in, on, over, under and through. Rotate toys to keep your mouse's play time interesting.

**NEVER** put your mice in an exercise ball. Exercise balls are dangerous and stressful for all animals. Rodents have poor eyesight. In a ball their vision is even more limited. They always run into furniture and walls, which they don't see coming. It's like a car crash for them. They back up to try and get away and end up crashing into something else. It's very stressful. In addition, paws can get pinched/broken in the air slits. Animals can become over-heated. If they go to the bathroom in the ball, they have to run in their own waste. Furthermore, their great joy in life is exploring and checking things out with their paws and noses. They can't do that in a plastic bubble. Provide a large, safe play area for your mice and trash the ball!

### **HANDLING**

Before you pick your mice up, make sure you have clean hands that do not smell like food. Make sure your mice are fully awake and aware of your presence. Scoop your mice up gently using both hands, a cup or a cardboard tube. **Never** pick your mice up by the tail, not even the base of the tail. The tail can break off or the skin can rip, leaving exposed bone.

### **Interested in mice?**

You can see our adoptable animals online at [www.smallangels.petfinder.com](http://www.smallangels.petfinder.com). Please email [mice@smallangelsrescue.org](mailto:mice@smallangelsrescue.org) or call 301-668-0404 for more information.