

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.

Female mice typically get along very well, tend to be easy to introduce to each other and should be kept in at least pairs whenever possible.

Male mice very rarely get along together and almost always have to be kept as singles due to fighting. Male mice also have a distinct scent that you should be okay with before you bring one home.

Fresh Wave Pet Crystals set near the habitat are excellent for controlling odor. You can check them out online at www.fresh-wave.com, www.amazon.com and we have seen them available at Bed, Bath & Beyond.

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 best kept in an aquarium. **It should be a minimum of 30 inches long.**

The aquarium should have a secure, well-ventilated, coated wire, screen lid. Ideally, the lid should lift on and off the aquarium vertically rather than slide off horizontally. You want to be able to attach the exercise wheel to the lid and can not do that with a lid that slides off to the side.

Goodwill/thrift stores, www.craigslist.org and www.freecycle.org are excellent places to find gently used aquariums at reasonable prices.

While we strongly recommend aquariums, 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 very 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 ceramic or vinyl tiles, cardboard (like cereal box cardboard) or other similar material.

Crittertrails, Habitrails, and/or SAM houses are not recommended. These are the colorful plastic and wire habitats with tubes. 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 available at most pet stores and through Small Angels Rescue. Aspen bedding is an acceptable second choice. Never use pine, cedar, sawdust, corn cob bedding, chlorophyll bedding or cat litter. **Pine and cedar are poisonous to all animals!**

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 absorb urine, be difficult to clean and can hold odor. Do not use the edible "Snak Shack" hide-aways. They are made from compressed pine, alfalfa and honey and are extremely unhealthy.

Use unscented toilet paper for nesting material. **Do not** use the commercial nesting cottony "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 hanging water bottle that has an angled stainless steel sipper tube with a ball bearing in the spout. A glass water bottle is preferred, but a plastic water bottle is acceptable. Give your mice fresh water

everyday. Filtered water is strongly recommended, especially if you are on city water. Make sure to tap the ball bearing in the sipper tube with your finger after every water change to make sure the water is coming out properly.

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:

Ecotrition Organic Hamster & Gerbil Food
Available in pet stores and online.

Reggie Rat made by Supreme
Available in pet stores and online – including www.petfooddirect.com

Linda's Premium Organic Rodent Mix
Available from www.craftyrat.com

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

We **highly** recommend mixing additional dry items into any/all commercial foods – like whole oats, whole grain wheat, barley, millet, kashi, spelt, quinoa, kamut, uncooked brown rice, uncooked vegetable pasta, dehydrated vegetables, flax seeds, sesame seeds and pumpkin seeds. Just mix right into the food.

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 goji berries, raw unsalted nuts (not peanuts), shredded coconut, 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.

HAY

Many mice enjoy playing in and nibbling on hay. It is an inexpensive enrichment item for their habitat. Simply put a large handful of loose hay in their aquarium and let them have fun. You can use timothy hay, orchard grass and mountain grass. Avoid alfalfa hay.

EXERCISE and PLAY

Mice need and enjoy an exercise wheel or exercise saucer. If you have multiple mice, you should consider providing multiple wheels/saucers. The exercise wheel should be at least six inches in diameter (8 inches is better) and provide a solid running surface.

Never use an exercise wheel with horizontal bars/rungs. Their feet, legs and/or tail can slip between the rungs, get caught and break.

We recommend Wodent Wheels, Comfort Wheels, Silent Spinner Wheels and Ware brand medium size Flying Saucers for mice. They are all available online, and Comfort Wheels, Silent Spinners and (sometimes) Flying Saucers can be found in most pet stores.

Mice need time out of their habitat everyday. A large Rubbermaid tub makes a wonderful 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. Check out www.tjschinchillasupplies.com, www.busybunny.com and www.leithpetwerks.com for a variety of fun and chew-safe toys.

TJ's Chinchilla Supplies generously donates supplies to various rescues, including Small Angels. By supporting them you are also supporting rescues and rescued animals.

Rotate toys every few days to keep life 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. The balls are poorly ventilated and 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 directly with their paws and noses. They can't do that in a plastic bubble. Provide a large, safe play area for your mice and skip 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.

We welcome questions!

Please contact us at mice@smallangelsrescue.org for more information. You can see our adoptable animals online at www.smallangels.petfinder.com.