

Common Breed



Degu:

Life span: 5 - 8 years

Size: Up to 40cm, including tail

If you have ever seen a gerbil, just imagine him a little bigger, and you will have a picture of a degu.

Degu eyes are dark brown. The color of their fur is always brown and grey. The tips of the hairs are black. The belly has a lighter color. The thickness of the fur depends on the environmental temperature. When it's cold the fur will be thicker compared to when it's warm.

Degu tails can be compared with a rat's tail, but there are a few differences. A rat's tail is naked, while a degu's tail is hairy and has a little floss at its tip. The degu's tail is also a bit shorter.

Usually degus get used to their owner very soon. If you regularly feed them by hand and if you take them out of their cage once in a while, they'll soon get used to you and your scent. It's best to house same gender pairs who were raised together.

But keep in mind that a degu never becomes as tame as, for example, a guinea pig; it's much too lively for that. A degu is certainly not suited for cuddling.

Supply list

Here's a list of the necessities you'll need to take home to help your new degu stay healthy and happy. Please ask one of our pet experts to help you choose these items.

Home

- ❖ Appropriate size and type of cage
- ❖ Aspen or other appropriate bedding
- ❖ Water bottle
- ❖ Food bowls
- ❖ Hiding house
- ❖ Solid surface exercise wheel
- ❖ Climbing toys
- ❖ Things to chew

Food

- ❖ 50-50 mixture of chinchilla pellets and guinea pig pellets
- ❖ Timothy hay
- ❖ Fresh green alfalfa
- ❖ Appropriate fresh veggies
- ❖ Treat sticks and chews

Extras

- ❖ Books and magazines
- ❖ Nesting material
- ❖ Chinchilla bath dust
- ❖ Exercise ball
- ❖ Cage cleaner and disinfectant
(Read and follow label instructions)

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DEGUS



Scientific name: *Octodon Degus*

For Ages: 12 & up, with adult supervision

Pet lifespan: Approximately 5 - 8 years

Pet Size: Up to 40cm, including tail

Traits & Behavior

Social: Degus can be kept individually or in same-gender groups (to prevent breeding). When keeping male degus together, keep an eye on them as it is possible for them to become territorial and aggressive as they mature. Degus also enjoy human interaction.

Active: Degus are very active. They are moving and playing a lot of time, instead of sleeping in a corner all day. They like climbing on branches and bars, and they can jump pretty far. They can get through very small holes, and move very fast. They love digging, and if they get the chance they will bury their food.

Diurnal: This means that degus are most active during the day. They have very short sleep cycles, with an average of about fifteen minutes.

Things to remember

Lifting & Handling: It's very important to handle your degu gently. Let them become aware of your hand, then hold them gently yet firmly around the chest, and support their back feet with your other hand. Never pick them up by their tail.

Special needs: Degus regularly need a sand bath. You can use the same sand that chinchilla's use for this purpose (Don't use other kinds of sand, because it's often sharp, and degus can hurt themselves). Degus tumble and crawl in this sand. Tumbling in a sand bath is necessary for cleaning the fur. So you'll need to place a sand bath in the cage regularly.

Exercise: Your degu will run on a wheel in their habitat. To protect their tail, make sure it's a solid surface wheel.

Safety & Cleanliness: Please remember that all pets may bite or scratch, and may transmit a disease to humans. Keep your pet's home clean and wash your hands before and after handling your pet or cleaning their home.

Nutrition

Staple diet: 50 - 50 mixture of chinchilla pellets and guinea pig pellets. Also provide timothy hay and fresh green alfalfa.

Vegetables: Once every three - four days treat your degu to sweet potatoes, carrots, and dandelion greens. Don't feed your degu the skin or the green parts of potatoes because they are harmful to their health.

Fruits: Do not feed your degu any sugar-holding food, like fruit or raisins. Degus can't metabolize sugar.

Treats sticks & chews: These hard and crunchy treats keep your degu's front teeth trimmed - always keep one in their habitat.

Water: Change and fill your degu's water bottle with clean water every day.

*Remember that fresh food items require their own dish and should be removed from the habitat after four hours to avoid spoilage. Treats should be less than 10% of total food intake.



Tip

Never grab or try to pick up a degu by the tail. They can easily lose part of their tail and have a messy injury as a result.

Habitat

Housing: Your degu needs a well-ventilated home with a solid floor. Degus gnaw at everything, and their cage must be made of glass or have iron bars. It should be large enough for a food dish, water bottle, a hiding house and climbing toys. There should be plenty of room for all cage accessories, and for them to move around freely.

Bedding: Line the cage floor with approximately 5 - 8cm of aspen or other appropriate bedding. Change it once a week or more often if needed.

Cage placement: Place the habitat in a cool, low humidity area, out of direct sunlight.

Health

Signs of a healthy degu:

- ❖ Clean, bright eyes
- ❖ Smooth coat
- ❖ Clean ears with no redness
- ❖ Eats and drinks normally
- ❖ Well-formed droppings with no diarrhea

Things to watch for:

- ❖ Overgrown front teeth
- ❖ Bare patches in the fur
- ❖ Weight loss; not eating or drinking normally
- ❖ Labored breathing; sneezing; discharge from the eyes, nose or mouth
- ❖ Diarrhea or discolored droppings for longer than two days.