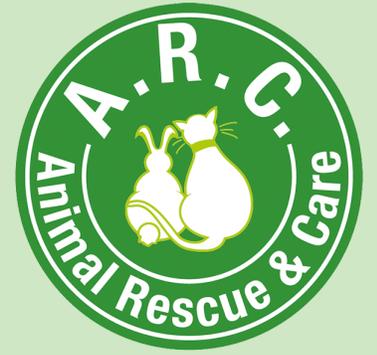


GERBIL ADOPTION FACT SHEET



We love gerbils and hope that you will too! These social, inquisitive, desert burrowers are awake during the day and provide hours of entertainment through watching them go about their daily business. This factsheet is designed to give you the basic information you need to provide the best home you can for these fascinating little creatures.

As prey animals, few gerbils enjoy being held and are generally fast and wriggly. With this in mind, we don't recommend them as good pets for young children. But for older children and adults, they provide a great opportunity to watch them as they build their intricate tunnel networks, forage for their food, destroy cardboard and wood and play together. With patience, they will reward you with trust and take treats from your hand and, if you're very lucky, they'll groom you and wink at you – a real honour showing that you're part of their clan.

Gerbils are highly social animals and have complex hierarchies in the wild. For that reason they must never be kept alone, but always in same sex pairs (preferably for females) or pairs and small groups for males. Adopt don't Shop!



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Food

We recommend mixing a couple of good quality foods together to give your gerbils all the variety, vitamins and minerals they need for a healthy balanced diet (fruit and vegetables are part of this diet and are described further below). Three dry foods we recommend are below. They can be purchased from a variety of locations. We mix these foods together, and always scatter feed to encourage natural foraging behaviour and add enrichment. Give each gerbil about a tablespoon full of dry food a day.

[Supreme Tiny Friends Farm Gerri Gerbil Tasty Mix](#)

[Bunny Nature Gerbil Dream Expert](#)

[Natural Gerbil Food \(erinsarkpetshop.com\)](#)



Treats

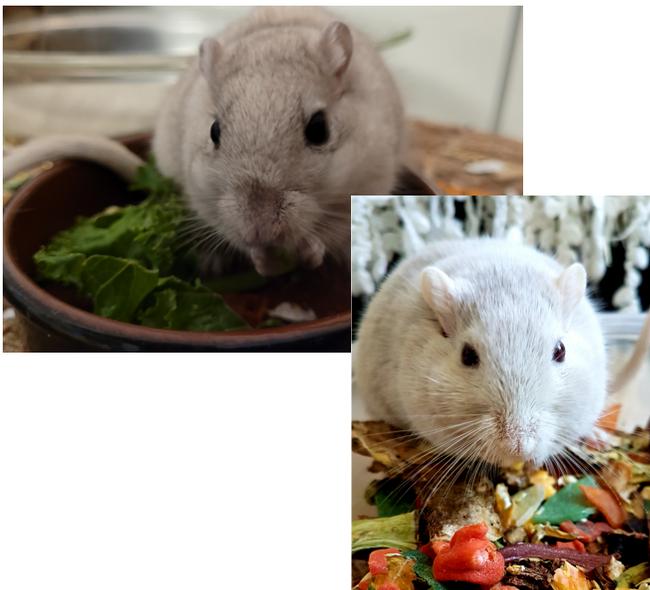
As with any treat, these should only be given in moderation as they tend to be quite high in fat

Sunflower seeds - we've never met a gerbil whose world doesn't stop when they come across a sunflower seed, please feed in moderation only as they are high fat.

Pumpkin seeds - these are lower fat treat alternatives to sunflower seeds

Millet spray - often given to birds, gerbils also love this as a treat

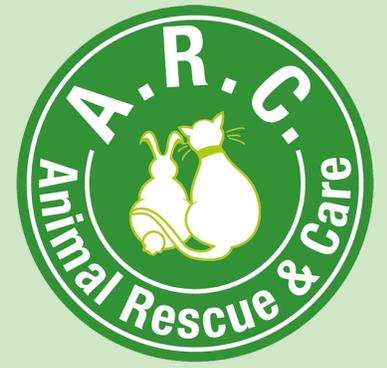
Mealworms - These are a good source of protein but, again a few weekly in moderation



Fruit & vegetables

Gerbils need fruit and veg, but only in small quantities. We feed ours small portions once to twice a week, and avoid anything with a high water content. **Dandelion leaves, kale, broccoli, brussel sprouts, peas, apple, carrot** they like for example. However, there are a lot of things that don't agree with gerbils so always check online before feeding fruit or vegetables to make sure they are safe.

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Substrate

A dust free, paper based substrate is the best. Wood shavings and sawdust often cause breathing difficulties and skin irritations, and should never be used.

We have found that the **finacard gerbil/mouse bale** is brilliant and lasts over 6 months. Not only is it economical, it's dust extracted and has no odour.

We add **timothy hay** which gerbils use to bind their tunnels and forage through.

Shredded paper from a home shredder can be added to the rest of your substrate.

Always ensure that substrate is at least 8-10 inches (20 cm) deep to give your gerbils enough space to build their intricate tunnel networks. Be creative and add into the mix brown packaging paper, egg boxes, postal tubes (around 7cm+ diameter to prevent Gerbils getting stuck).

Nesting material

We use **plain, unscented toilet paper** as nesting material. throw it in the tank and your gerbils will do the rest. Never use fluffy bedding as small furries can get tangled up amongst it. This results in broken limbs and in extreme cases, death.



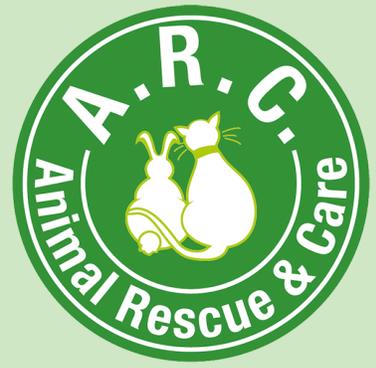
Nesting boxes

We use a corner cabin for small pets, which is a good size for up to 3 gerbils. We place it at the bottom of their tank and covered in deep substrate. It also gives them something to gnaw.

https://www.zooplus.co.uk/shop/small_pets/accessories/cabins/wooden_houses/228485



GERBIL ADOPTION FACT SHEET



Wheel

The ideal size is 28cm, but few tank set ups allow for this size, in which case 21cm can work. The wheel must be wooden (gerbils should never be given anything plastic and no open rungs which can damage their limbs and tails). We use the **trixie wooden exercise wheel**. These come in both 21cm and 28cm sizes.



Sand Bath

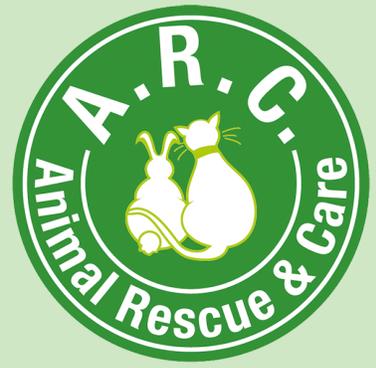
These are essential for keeping their coats in good condition. An oval pyrex dish is ideal for this purpose - 20cm long x 15cm wide x 6cm deep is the perfect minimum size. Should be placed away from the substrate to avoid the sand being covered by their digging activities! They'll use the sand as a bath and also as a litter tray.

Tiny Friends Farm Charlie Harry and Gerri Bathing Sand is what we use. Never use chinchilla dust as this is too fine for their coats and clumps. Children's play sand is also not suitable for gerbils

Top tip - sieve any dirt out of the sand twice a day to make it last longer - you'll then only need to change the sand once a week.



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Free roaming

The best way for gerbils to have playtime is to allow them free access from their tank (via a ladder which makes them feel more secure). If a ladder isn't possible, you can train your gerbils to hop into a coconut shell, tube or sandbath to lift them into their play area and back again. Ensure the whole area is wire free, and doorways can be blocked off with a 2ft high piece of solid wood, like a "gerbil baby-gate". A bathroom is also a good area for exercise. They will need exercise daily. Never use plastic exercise balls as they distress and disorientate rodents.

Ladders/ledges

Wooden ledges are widely available from many sellers online. Go for untreated, kiln dried. We source most of ours from [this seller on Etsy](#) for example. If you go for coloured ledges/ladders, ensure the paint is pet safe.

Tank set up and cleaning

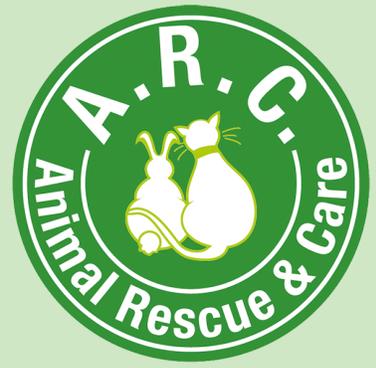
Use only natural wooden items, never plastic. Spot clean the top ledges every day, change water (ensure daily that the water bottle is dispensing water as they often fail), sieve sand, and a top tip is to use cardboard to cover all wooden ledges - this card will stop the ledges from getting dirty and smelling, it is also easy to change.

Depending on your tank size, you can clean the main burrowing area every 4-6 weeks, this is also affected by how much you let them free roam and when you feel it's needed. Gerbils are very clean and it find it stressful when their environment and tunnel systems are changed too often. When you change the substrate always put back about 20% of the old bedding in as this gives them a familiar scent.

Place their nesting box at the bottom with some toilet sheets inside, layer up new finacard, a layer of timothy hay and a layer of old substrate. Shredded paper is good to use too. Scatter food into the layers to encourage their natural foraging instincts and repeat stages until at least 8-10inches (20cm) deep. Egg boxes, brown packaging paper, cardboard tubes, small cardboard boxes etc. can all be thrown into the mix too and add cheap and great enrichment. Keep adding toilet roll sheets to the tank between cleans as nest construction is an ongoing project!

Some good tank set up examples are below in the Housing & Tanks section.

GERBIL ADOPTION FACT SHEET



Housing & Tanks

Here we give some suggestions of suitable homes for gerbils. We recommend minimum sizing of 80cm x 30cm x 50cm i.e. Gabry below. Pet shops rarely have anything suitable for gerbils. Wire floors or ladders should never be used, as they trap limbs. Tank examples are below, please note that some of these items might be out of stock brand new but can be sourced on second hand selling sites. However, the first few suggested tanks have good availability. Gerbils should never be housed in hamster cages, they are completely unsuitable, allow no room to burrow and contain plastic.

Ikea Detolf - This is an Ikea cabinet available for around £65, available for delivery direct from Ikea, and a popular hack for rodent owners and by far the best tank option. The Ikea Kallax is the perfect stand. It does involve some DIY of building lids and the whole set up can sometimes be found online pre converted or there are several Etsy & Facebook sellers who can pre-build lids for you. It's approx 160cm long and 43cm wide. If you search on the internet you will find many hundreds of customisations to this enormous tank, including ones where people have made it even bigger by adding a topper.



Ferplast Gabry 80 - At 80x30x50cm this is the smallest off the shelf tank we'd recommend. It needs a few easy modifications with shelving and to attach a wheel - see the ledges section earlier.

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Tanks - continued

Jungle Pets - a good choice for size, availability, pictured below left. They deliver in their own vans on set days for areas. Don't go for a tank with platforms as you can't fit a wheel in, plus the platforms are too low to allow 8-10 inches of burrowing substrate. Go for a minimum of Hamster, Gerbil, Mice Tank- 36" x 21" tall X 15" no platforms the bigger the better. You can divide it into two parts using a log roll to separate the burrowing area from the food, sand, and wheel area. You need at least 15" high to get a full sized wheel in. Alternatively you could add a topper. The picture below right is of a DIY aquarium/topper set up. A topper is simply a second level, made from the top wire part of an old Hamster cage, with wooden ledges added and lids made from mouse wire and a wooden frame to hold the topper in place.



Skyline Falco - 75x45x63 this is a good tank, however supplier issues mean it's not often available now, but can be found on second hand selling sites (pictured left).