Mice

Mice are active and entertaining small companion animals. They have an average lifespan of 1-2 years, and while females may enjoy being kept in pairs or trios, males generally prefer to be kept alone as they may fight at maturity. With proper care they can be very social and may be handled gently by experienced guardians.

**Housing and Enrichment**

Mice require at least a 10-gallon tank (10” wide by 20” long by 12” tall) or an equivalent sized enclosure. A 20-gallon long tank (30” x 12” x 12”) is even better, and of course larger cages are always preferred. Make sure if you use a wire cage that it has a deep tray and no wire floor. Any shelves or ramps should be of a solid surface so little paws do not get caught, and bar spacing should be no more than ¼” to prevent escape. We strongly advise against the use of plastic tube-style cages as they lack ventilation and are very difficult to clean properly. Some people make their own enclosures out of large plastic storage bins outfitted with screen panels in the lid - there are a lot of great ideas online!

Because mice love to burrow, cover the floor with at least two inches of bedding material such as Care Fresh or a similar paper product, or small animal approved wood shavings. Cedar chips should never be used. Your mouse’s cage should be spot-cleaned daily, with bedding completely changed and a more thorough cleaning done every 5-10 days, depending on cage size and number of inhabitants. Males have a strong odor and may need to be cleaned more frequently.

Your mouse will need a variety of furnishings and enrichment items in their cage to provide security, stimulation, and exercise. One or two nesting boxes, tunnels to run through, mouse-safe wooden chew toys, untreated apple branches, and boxes to play in are all appreciated. Exercise wheels are also an important part of any mouse setup and should have a solid surface, not made from bars or wire grates. We do NOT recommend “hamster balls” as they can be scary for your mouse and are known to cause injuries.
Diet

The base of your mouse’s diet should be a high quality rodent food, either a pelleted/block type or muesli style mix, or both. This should then be supplemented with fresh foods. In addition, offer a handful of fresh timothy or orchard grass hay - this is good for them to eat, and it is also fun to play in and nest with. There are extensive lists online that describe what fresh foods are best for mice, and which are dangerous, so make sure to do your research. Fresh water in a clean small-animal water bottle should be available at all times.

Health

Mice are creatures of habit, so getting to know their normal behaviors and routines is key to picking up on changes that may indicate health concerns. Spend some time with your mouse every day and if you see any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately:

- Lethargy
- Lalking/moving stiffly or hunched posture
- Dull or sunken looking eyes
- Decrease in appetite or not eating at all
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Excessive scratching or hairloss
- Overgrown or misshapen teeth
- Lumps or bumps
- Sudden or more irritability

Handling and Socialization

Mice are individuals, each with their own personality and behaviors. They don’t often care for being picked up, but can learn to tolerate it. The key is to take it slowly! Some tips for building a relationship with your mouse include:

- Let them adjust to their new home without forced interaction for several days
- Place your hand in their cage briefly and allow them to approach and sniff at their own pace
- Offer small treats by hand
- Once comfortable with your presence, you can try a gentle touch
- Progress to coaxing them onto your hand, or gently scooping them up while in the cage
- When they appear comfortable with in-cage handling, move to outside of the cage
- A frightened mouse may jump, so make sure to be sitting down when handling
- Remember to take it slow!

Some mice will be social butterflies while others may never care for handling, so it is important to respect their individuality. But if you give them lots of love and attention you will for sure become fast friends who enjoy each other’s company and companionship.