



Craven Animal Hospital
4603 Old Cherry Point Road
New Bern, NC 28560 US
Phone: (252) 637-4541
Fax: (252) 637-3658



This handout is intended to provide only very general guidelines. Consult with your veterinarian about other aspects of advanced care that can be considered to ensure adequate health.

General Information

Gerbils come in a variety of colors. They are fast-moving creatures with a generally docile nature. Males should not be kept with females unless they are neutered as they can breed readily and can have numerous offspring. Use caution when picking up gerbils because if you hold the tail the skin around it may come off!

Lifespan

The average lifespan of gerbils is ~2 years.

Housing

Gerbils need a solid bottom cage at least one-foot-long with plenty of ventilation. Aquarium style cages are not appropriate due to poor ventilation. Gerbils urinate and defecate a lot so their cage should be cleaned at least 1-2 times weekly. Carefresh (recycled shredded paper) bedding is preferred to use at the bottom of the cage and should be piled at least 1-2" deep to encourage natural digging and nesting behaviors. Toilet paper rolls offer great hiding places and provide gerbils with enrichment as they enjoy tearing them up. Cardboard, wooden chews, grass hay, newspaper, and other destructible toys (avoid plastic) provide additional enrichment. Because gerbils will chew wood and plastic, only ceramic or metal dishes should be used for food and water. Water bowls get very dirty so water bottles attached to the side of the cage should be used. Make sure that fresh water is available at all times. An exercise wheel may also be provided for exercise. Exercise balls are very popular but should be used with caution around stairs or other pets.

Diet

There are many varieties of gerbil food mixes, which will generally have a blend of fruits, vegetables, seeds and grains. Fresh vegetables or snacks may be offered such as leafy greens or fresh pasta.

Common Medical Conditions

Trauma/Foreign bodies

- Keep electrical cords out of reach as these can pose grave danger
- Broken bones, wounds and burns can occur if gerbils are left unsupervised

References

Animal Hospital in Centennial, CO. Aurora Animal Hospital. (n.d.). <https://www.auroraanimalhospital.com/>

For Exotic Animal Veterinary Medicine Professionals. LafeberVet. (2025, April 25). <https://lafeber.com/vet/>