



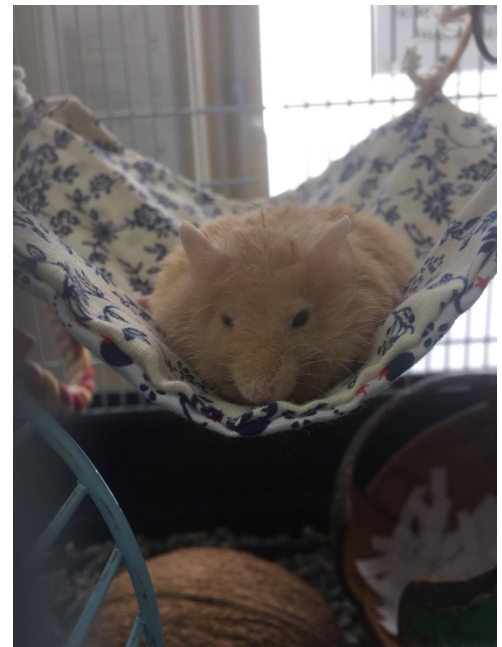
## Mice – feeding, husbandry and veterinary care

Mice are intelligent, inquisitive and make great pets. They are relatively easy to care for however there is some important information about feeding, husbandry and veterinary care that all mouse owners should understand. This care sheet will highlight these important points and share some handy tips about mouse care.

### **Basic & Interesting Information:**

There are many species of true mouse, however, the species most commonly kept as pets is called the house mouse (*Mus musculus*). They generally live for an average of 1- 2 years however some can live longer. There are many different coat type and colour variations available in Australia.

Mice are prolific breeders. A female mouse (doe) has an oestrous cycle of about 4-5 days, and can get pregnant immediately after giving birth. An average mouse litter size is between 7-12 babies and the average gestation period of a mouse is between 19-21 days. Baby mice (pups) are born in a nest without fur and closed eyes. Pups will begin to open their eyes at about 12-14 days of age. It is recommended that mice pups be weaned at about 18 – 21 days of age. Mice will reach sexual maturity at about 4-6 weeks of age. If young males (bucks) are left with their female littermates and mother, unwanted pregnancies can occur and population control can become an issue. It is recommended not to breed mice before they are mature enough at around 2-3 months of age.



### **Choosing a healthy Mouse:**

There are many different places where you can purchase your pet mouse in Western Australia including pet shops and private breeders. Regardless of where you choose to buy your mouse from it is important that you give them a thorough examination before purchasing. Mice should have a healthy gleaming coat with no patches of missing fur, clear bright eyes, clean feet without sores, an active and curious disposition and have well-formed faeces. It can require some skill to correctly identify the sex of young mice, therefore we recommend buying from someone that has experience in determining the sex of young mice. If any problems are identified it may be best to consider having a mouse vet check-up before purchasing your mouse.

### **General Keeping Recommendations:**

Mice benefit from having another mouse as a companion. A same-sexed littermate or same-sexed mouse of a similar age makes the ideal companion. There is little difference between bucks and does as pets, however, it is important to keep in mind that two adult bucks who are unfamiliar to each other will tend to fight





one another if introduced suddenly. Castration of both bucks will usually help stop them fighting. Bucks are also said to have a more notable odour than females.

Good husbandry is very important with mice, with many diseases being preventable with adequate husbandry. Mice like to chew, therefore any cage used to house a mouse must be made of materials impervious to chewing. Cages with multiple levels are beneficial to encourage normal behaviours, sufficient exercise and enrichment.

An absorbent substrate such as a recycled paper kitty litter is ideal. Mice love a place to hide and multiple shelters or houses should be provided to keep your pet mouse happy. Nesting materials such as shredded paper and dried grass can be added to the cage so that your pet mouse can make their house more comfortable. Mice love to play and enrichment can be provided in the form of toys, ladders, chewable items and empty boxes.

Ammonia is produced in mouse urine and mice are sensitive to high ammonia levels in the air leading to respiratory tract infections. Keeping a cage clean and tidy helps to keep ammonia levels down and avoid potential problems.

Mice are sensitive to the heat and may experience heat exhaustion when temperatures are in excess of 30°C. In some cases, heat exhaustion can be very severe and can lead to death. It is important to keep your pet mouse cool on hot days, especially if they are living outside the house. Make sure to provide plenty of water, fruit and vegetables on hot days and that the cage is not in full sun and has plenty of shade throughout the day. Frozen water bottles can be provided as a cool object for your mouse to lay against on a hot day.

### **What to feed my mouse?**

Mice are omnivores, eating both plant and animal foods. Historically it was thought that a seed-based diet would be sufficient for mice, however, it is now known that these diets lack many nutritional requirements needed to maintain adequate health. As such we do not recommend feeding a diet that include too many seeds or grains. Fortunately, there are many commercial mouse pellets and mixes available that are suitable and should be offered to your pet mouse at all times.

Other food items such as mouse specific treats, fruits, vegetables, pasta and rice should only be offered in limited quantities to avoid gastrointestinal upset. These items can often be used as treats or rewards when training your pet mouse. Your mouse should also have free access to fresh water at all times.

### **What do I need to take my mouse to the vet for?**

Mice require regular veterinary care and check-ups. The following is a summary of what we recommend.

#### **Annual check up**





We recommend annual health checks for mice. At this time your mouse will receive a thorough examination to help identify any problems that are occurring.

There are no vaccinations available for mice in Australia, and as such, mice do not require annual vaccinations.

### **Sterilisation (Males only)**

- Reducing the risk of fights occurring if you have more than one mouse and decreasing aggression between bucks
- Prevents unwanted pregnancies

### **Summary**

Mice make wonderful pets! By following the above advice you can help to reduce the chances of common problems occurring and ensure that your mouse is receiving the care that it deserves. Unfortunately, even with the best care problems can still occur and if you are at all concerned about your mouse please contact us to arrange an appointment. Things to watch out for include but are not limited to the following:

- Lethargy
- Diarrhoea
- Weak hind legs
- Hair loss
- Not eating or not drinking
- Dull eye colour or coat
- Dirty teeth
- Scratching excessively
- Water staining around mouth
- Weight loss
- Discharge from eyes and/or nostrils
- Lump formation
- Abnormal breathing

