

MOUSE CARE GUIDE



RAYSTED E
GIVING ANIMALS A BETTER LIFE

Mice are entertaining to keep and can make amazing pets for all ages. It is important to meet all their needs to ensure that they lead a happy, healthy life.

To ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of your mice and to enable them to thrive you will need to:



Provide a suitable and stimulating living environment



A group of up to three mice require a minimum enclosure of **80cm x 50cm x 50cm (L x D x H)** or **2.6ft x 1.6ft x 1.6ft**, and larger groups of up to 5 mice require a minimum enclosure of **100cm x 50cm x 50cm** or **3.2ft x 1.6ft x 1.6ft**.

Mice are extremely active and inquisitive animals so making use of all the space in their enclosure is important. Hanging enrichment such as ladders, hammocks and platforms allow them to show off their natural climbing ability, and areas of deeper substrate encourage them to dig and create tunnels. If their enclosure is not stimulating or too small, they may start to exhibit stereotypical behaviours such as bar biting and over-grooming.



There are various suitable enclosures on the market ranging from plastic, metal and glass enclosures and some designs may suit individual mice better than others. Bar spacing is an important aspect to consider when purchasing an enclosure, larger adult mice require a maximum of 0.9cm bar spacing while smaller females or youngsters require a maximum of 0.6cm to prevent any escapees. It is also important that the enclosure is suitably ventilated to prevent ammonia build up. Not all commonly available enclosures provide enough space for mice, please ask the Small Animals Team if you need any help in choosing an appropriate enclosure.



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An enriching mouse enclosure will have:

- A safe substrate with deeper areas for digging (our recommendations are below)
- Hides filled with a cosy bedding material (teabag or tissue bedding)
- Enrichment such as tunnels, bridges, logs, ladders, dig box etc (preferably plastic free)
- Hammocks or hanging objects for climbing
- A 21cm or 28cm wheel
- A food and water bowl; water bowls are recommended over bottles as they allow for natural drinking, are more hygienic and do not malfunction



Bedding recommendations:

- Shredded cardboard e.g., EcoBale and Bedkind
- Paper based bedding e.g. Back 2 Nature and Carefresh
- Kiln dried, dust extracted wood chip bedding e.g., Pillow Wad – please note that other forms of wood shavings and sawdust are unsafe and can cause respiratory and liver issues
- Plant based bedding e.g., Aubiose, Megazorb

Mice have a delicate respiratory system so any dusty beddings or sand baths should be avoided and full cleans of the enclosure are recommended weekly to avoid ammonia build up.

We recommend avoiding most wood shavings or sawdust products as these are known to cause respiratory and liver issues. Fluffy cotton wool style bedding should also be avoided as it can cause blockages if ingested and can get tangled around limbs. Please also avoid purchasing enrichment made of compressed wood shavings as these are dangerous if consumed. If you would like any recommendations, please contact the Small Animals Team.



Preserve their health by protecting them from pain, injury and disease



Finding a mouse-savvy vet can be difficult, it is a good idea to check that your vet is able to treat them or seek a specialist exotic vet.

Check your mice for signs of injury or illness every day and seek veterinary advice if necessary.

- Check teeth and nails are not becoming overgrown
- Check eyes are clear and bright
- Check coat and skin for signs of mites, bald patches, sores, or lumps
- Check nose for discharge and for clear breathing
- Check for a clean and dry bottom
- Monitor faeces and urine for any changes from the norm
- Check for abnormal lumps
- Check for normal movement (no limping etc)

Mice are prone to respiratory infections and abnormal lumps (such as tumours), both illnesses require immediate veterinary attention.

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Provide a nutritious diet and fresh water



Mice require a good quality, omnivorous diet that contains a variety of seeds, pulses, grains and protein in the form of dried insects (such as shrimp, mealworms etc) or egg biscuit. There are a variety of pre-made mixes and complete pellets available on the market, check the labels and select those with good quality ingredients.

Healthy treats include:

- Fresh/dried flowers: dandelion, clover, rose, hibiscus etc
- Fresh vegetables and fruit: leafy greens (kale, spinach, herbs), pepper, broccoli, apple, peas, berries, banana
- Pasta (raw or cooked)
- Boiled or scrambled egg
- Cheese/Yoghurt (very small amounts as high in fat)
- Peanut butter (high in fat)
- Unsweetened cereals
- Fresh/dried insects
- Dog biscuits
- Safe twigs/branches (apple, willow, hazel)

Avoid any commercial stick treats with honey as these are too sugary which can cause diabetes and obesity, mineral blocks are unnecessary.



Promote natural behaviour and provide appropriate companionship



Mice are naturally curious and intelligent animals who spend a lot of their time socialising, creating nests and foraging for food. Without a stimulating environment they can develop stereotypic behaviours such as pacing, bar chewing and over-grooming which can have a detrimental effect on their quality of life.

Mice will use all the space available to them, including hanging enrichment and platforms which allow the mice to exhibit their natural climbing ability. Mice enjoy digging so it's important to provide areas of deep bedding in their enclosure. Changing the enrichment and substrate frequently encourages foraging and allowing them to experience new smells and textures. Enrichment does not need to be expensive; old plastic children's toys, coconut shells, cardboard boxes and tubes or scatter feeding can be very exciting to mice!



Within the enclosure it is important to provide chewing opportunities such as wooden enrichment, millet sprays, dust-extracted hay or safe branches (e.g. willow, hawthorn, apple, pear and hazel) as these are beneficial to mental and physical health.

Mice are social animals and benefit from having at least one companion. Entire male mice should not be kept together due to territorial behaviours, or with entire females to prevent unwanted breeding. Neutering male mice allows them to be kept in harmonious pairs and groups and can also reduce the strength of their natural scent.

Within a group of mice (known as a mischief) there are dominant and subordinate individuals, so it is important to ensure that the enclosure has enough enrichment, houses, and feeding/watering stations to allow all the group access without causing arguments. You will find that a mischief will all enjoy sleeping together, so providing houses large enough for them to all nest in is essential!

Secure play areas, such as pop-up ball pits, can make exciting and secure playpens for mice when under supervision. It gives them an option to explore a new area and you can change enrichment and layout frequently. This is a good alternative to exercise balls which are considered stressful and can cause injuries. If you adopt a more nervous animal, sitting in the play pen with them (or a bath lined with a towel) can help them to gain confidence with you while providing a safe space for handling.

We recommend letting small animals settle for a few weeks before starting the handling process. Beginning low to the ground (within a playpen or enclosure) is a good idea, it allows your mice to gain confidence with handling while keeping them safe should they run away. Ensure that when handling you fully support their whole body and do not hold their delicate tails.

