

Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic

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Care of Degu

Introduction: Degus are very social and should be kept in groups or pairs. They are active during the night and day, most active in early morning and early evening. They will stockpile food in cages, and enjoy building nests with paper and shavings. Add new degus together in neutral territory to see if they get along.

Captivity Requirements: A metal and glass aquarium/cage combination is recommended for housing, preferably not totally enclosed to allow air circulation. Some degus have been known to escape from plastic enclosures. Degus need some kind of a nest box made of wood or cardboard (these will probably be periodically destroyed and need to be replaced), a water bottle, heavy food bowls that can't be tipped over, and a running wheel for exercise. Many degus enjoy rolling in a sand bath. Use pine or aspen shavings, or commercial recycled products for bedding. Cedar bedding is not recommended as it may worsen respiratory disease.

Diet: In the wild, degus are herbivorous and eat a variety of plants, bulbs, leaves, bark, and sometimes even farmer's crops. In some countries they are considered pests. Feed primarily chinchilla or guinea pig pellets, but not brands with added dried fruits or nuts. We recommend Oxbow products. Offer small amounts of rodent block for laboratory rats. Grass hay must be available at all times. Offer fresh grasses, and greens that are washed carefully and free of pesticides. Do not feed sugar, grains or fat, so therefore avoid seeds, diets made from corn and wheat, and human junk food. Note that some commercial degu foods contain these items, so read labels carefully.

Diseases:

- Injuries from fall, escapes or other household pets such as cats
- Diabetes (thought to be related to high sugar and carbohydrate diet)
- Diarrhea
- Pneumonia

Yearly physical examination and check up with an experienced exotic animal veterinarian is recommended.