

## **Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic**

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### **Care of the Spiny Mouse**

#### **Introduction:**

There are several species of spiny mice but only 2 species, the Golden Spiny Mouse and the Egyptian Spiny Mouse, are commonly kept as pets. Spiny mice enjoy a wide geological distribution from North America to Israel to Pakistan. In their native habitat they live in cracked soil, rock crevices, and gerbil burrows in semi-desert and savannah areas. The Golden Spiny mouse is generally diurnal, meaning they are active during the day, while the Egyptian Spiny Mouse is generally nocturnal, meaning they are active during the night. Spiny mice get their name from the fact that their hair coat is modified into coarse bristle like spines that make them unpalatable to predators. Commonly spiny mice live about 3 years, but some have lived up to 5 years.

#### **Captivity Requirements:**

A 10 or 20-gallon aquarium with a well-fitting but well ventilated lid is suitable for spiny mice. Do not use plastic hamster cages because your spiny mouse will chew through the plastic and escape. Shredded paper, paper bedding, or pine shavings can be used as bedding. Other aromatic woods, like cedar, should be avoided. A small cave area should be provided for your spiny mouse to live in. A ceramic flowerpot on its side works well for this. Other cage accessories can include branches, thick ropes, and tubes to crawl in. A small ceramic dish can be used as a food dish and a 4 or 8-ounce water bottle works well. Since these animals are from the desert, the cage should be kept at approximately 80°F and the humidity should be kept low.

#### **Diet:**

In the wild, spiny mice are actually thought to eat anything that is available, including the mummified corpses of the pharaohs! In captivity, a spiny mouse should be fed a standard rodent block diet, some fruits and vegetables, small amounts of meat or egg with occasional insets like crickets or mealworms as treats. Spiny mice are vulnerable to obesity; diets that contain seeds, nuts, and dried fruits should be avoided.