

Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic

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Care of Sugar Gliders

Introduction: Sugar Gliders originated from New Guinea and Australia. These arboreal (or tree dwelling) animals are nocturnal and very social at night. In the wild they live in open forest and make their home in leaf nests in tree hollows. They reach sexual maturity at approximately 12 months of age. Sugar gliders are marsupials. They have a short gestation that consists of only 16 days. The females have a pouch in which the babies will be supported for 70 days after birth. The male sugar glider will help care for the babies. Babies can be weaned at 3 ½ months of age. The longest lifespan of a sugar glider kept in captivity was 14 years.

Captivity Requirements: These active creatures require a habitat that is large enough to allow for significant jumping and leaping. Natural branches with bark for climbing (maple, oak, hickory, apple), nest boxes or hollow logs are suggested to mimic the environment they from which they originated. Make sure all branches and toys are tightly secured in a place that is easily accessible to the sugar glider. They feel most secure in arboreal environment. Nesting boxes and toys should be placed in the higher area of the cage. Males mark with strongly scented urine and secretions from scent glands while females will mark only with urine. Thorough cleaning of cage will minimize odor.

Diet:

Sugar gliders are omnivorous animals that feed on sap, blossoms, nectar, insects, larvae, arachnids, and small vertebrates in the wild. Captive sugar gliders can be fed a mixture of insectavore diet (50%) and Leadbeater's mixture (50%). Fruit, crickets, bee pollen, worms and insects can be given as treats.

Recipe for Leadbeater's Mixture 50%

- 5 oz warm water
- 5 oz honey
- 1 shelled hard boiled egg
- 9 tbsp. high protein baby cereal
- 1 tsp. powdered vitamin/mineral supplement

Mix honey and water in separate container; blend egg until homogenized. Gradually add honey/water, then vitamin powder, then baby cereal, blending after each addition until smooth. Keep refrigerated or freeze in ice cube tray portions, defrosting as needed for feeding

Diseases:

Malnutrition – poor coat, hind limb weakness, diarrhea, etc

Blindness and cataracts

Trauma – fractures, etc

Stress related behaviors – pacing, self mutilation, overheating, overdrinking, cannibalism of young, eating droppings