

# Care Guide

## Degu

(Octodon degus)

### Facts:

Average adult size: **12 to 17 inches long**  
Average life span: **4 - 8 yrs with proper care**  
Diet: **Herbivore**



Degus are intelligent, inquisitive, sociable, and active during the day.

### Feeding & Nutrition:

#### Food

- High-quality Chinchilla or Guinea Pig food
- Timothy hay
- Treats (Sunflower seeds – 2-3 a week; Root vegetables like carrots)
- Do not feed fruits – degus are unable to process sugar.
- Do not feed chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions. Avoid sugar, food and treats high in carbohydrates and high fat treats.

#### Water

- Fresh water should be provided daily in water bottles to prevent contamination.
- Bottles need to be kept clean inside by soaking in a 10% bleach solution for ten minutes every two to three weeks and then scrubbed out with soap and a bottle brush. Bottles should be completely replaced with new ones every six months.

#### Frequency of Food

- Fresh food, timothy hay and water should always be available.
- Limited amounts of vegetables can be given daily.
- Vegetables not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.
- Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake.

### Housing:

#### Cage

- Large, multi-tiered wire-sided habitat with good ventilation, a secure door, and a solid floor.
- Openings between the wires should be small enough so the habitat is escape-proof.
- Habitat should also include a hammock, hiding place, litter box and toys.
- It is best to provide the largest habitat possible.
- Degus acclimate well to average household temperatures, not to exceed 88° F. The habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
- It's recommended to house at least two Degus together. A same sex pair can usually be housed together with no aggression problems.
- **Different types of small animals should not be housed together.**

#### Bedding

- 1-2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat
- Proper bedding includes high quality paper bedding, crumbled paper bedding, or aspen

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shavings.

- Avoid Cedar-based products.

## Habitat Maintenance

- Clean the habitat and its contents at least once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and dry completely before placing back into the habitat.
- Remove wet spots daily; change bedding at least once a week, or more often as necessary.

## Care:

### Grooming & Hygiene

- Degus require a dust bath at least twice a week; remove dust after 15-30 minutes.
- Consult a veterinarian if a degu's teeth seem too long.

### Health

- Active, alert, and sociable
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Healthy fur and clear eyes
- Breathing is clear and walks normally
- It is normal for a degu's teeth to be yellow; cleaning is not necessary.

### Normal Behavior

- A degu that is handled and played with early in life is likely to become very tame and enjoy being picked up and held. However, some Degus, particularly those that live a solitary existence, never seem to get comfortable with handling. Their wishes should be respected, since this little rodent can deliver a surprisingly painful bite.
- Win a new degu's trust by approaching it gradually and speaking in a soft voice, then let it come to you rather than moving too aggressively toward it. Never pick up a degu by the neck or tail. A degu will shed its tail if it is grasped, and once it falls off, it will never grow back.
- Chews on objects to maintain all their teeth, which grow continuously; ensure they have plenty of chew sticks available.

## Recommended Supplies:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate Size Habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> Hide                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Chew Sticks or Blocks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-quality Food        | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treats                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dust Bath             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl/Water bottle   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dust                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Timothy Hay              | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport Cage        |

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