

Richardson Ground Squirrel

Care Sheet



Origin:

Found in the short grass prairies of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Canada.

Description:

Richardson's ground squirrels are a member of the squirrel family in the order Rodentia. They are often referred to as the "Flickertail Squirrel" because of the constant trembling of their tails. A Richardson's ground squirrel is diurnal meaning it is active during the daylight hours. They are normally dark brown to buff yellow in color on their topside with a tan underbelly that displays some red highlighting. They have can live up to 5 to 6 years in captivity.

Feeding:

Richardson's ground squirrels feed on hay, rodent block and fresh fruits and vegetables. Any type of hay will do just fine but do not use alfalfa hay except as a treat. Fresh corn on the cob is a favorite but use in moderation. Romaine lettuce, carrots, green beans, plums and potatoes are also recommended. Do not give ground squirrels any green part of a potato because it is toxic to them. Nuts, dry dog food, crackers, oats, yogurt and parrot mix may be used for treats. They also like prickly pear cactus. Try to offer a variety of items since all ground squirrels don't have the same preferences. A good treat for their teeth is dried corn on the cob, hard beef bones or dried pig ears. A Richardson's ground squirrel should not weigh over 3 pounds. They love to eat but if they are overfed, they may get sick and die. Provide water in a water bottle.

Housing:

The best cage for a Richardson's ground squirrel is a multi-level ferret cage. The multi-level ferret cage is closest to a burrow and gives the ground squirrel adequate room to move around and stand up. Richardson's ground squirrels may be moved between different cages to keep them from becoming bored. The cage tray bottom may be lined with pine shavings or aspen bedding to absorb moisture. Hay and bedding material may be added for them to weave a nest with. Coconuts are ideal for them to chew on and then make a bed out of. This ground squirrel can be trained to use a litter pan and also enjoys an exercise wheel.

Bonding:

When you first bring your ground squirrel home, hold it even if it protests. You may use gloves if necessary and must not let the ground squirrel loose. If the ground squirrel bites, discipline it. Never let it jump out of the cage when you open the door. You must always have it jump or walk into your arms and then you may put it down. A ground squirrel must be taught that you

are the boss. You must not give an inch with them while they are pups. Once a ground squirrel has bonded with you, it will love you like its own family. A ground squirrel has a variety of vocal signals and body movements which you must learn to recognize and respect.

Recommended Supplies:

- Cage
- Prairie Dog Food
- Timothy Hay
- Wheel
- Water Bottle
- Food Bowl
- Vitamins
- Chew Blocks