

### **Lifespan**

With good care the average lifespan is about 2 years.

### **Behaviors**

Gerbils come in a variety of colors. They are fast but generally docile. Gerbils can sometimes be kept together if they were raised together and the same gender, however some will still fight and will need to be separated. Males should not be kept with females unless they are neutered because they breed readily and have large amounts of babies.



Use caution when picking up gerbils because if you hold the tail the skin may come off!

### **Housing**

Gerbils need a solid bottom cage at least one-foot-long with a lot of ventilation. The cage must be escape proof as gerbils are master escape artists! The plastic bottomed cages with wire tops that you can attach tubes to work very well. Aquarium style cages are not appropriate due to poor ventilation. Gerbils urinate and defecate a lot so their cage should be cleaned frequently (at least 1-2 times weekly) to reduce waste odor and contamination.

Carefresh (recycled shredded paper) bedding is the best option to use at the bottom of the cage at least 1-2" deep. Gerbils will nest in the bedding and will shred toilet paper if offered to line their nest. Toilet paper rolls offer great hiding places and rats enjoy destroying them as well. Cardboard, wooden chews, grass hay, newspaper, and other destructible toys (avoid plastic) provide good chewing opportunities.

They will chew wood and plastic so only ceramic or metal dishes should be used. Water bowls get very dirty so water bottles attached to the side of the cage should be used. Make sure that fresh water is available at all times. Periodically check the corners and edges of the cage to ensure that they have not started chewing any holes that may lead to escape.

A solid sided exercise wheel in the cage should be available for exercise. Time outside of the cage to explore a safe area is great enrichment. Exercise balls are very popular but use with caution around stairs or other pets.

### **Diet and Nutrition**

There are many varieties of gerbil food mixes, which will generally have a blend of fruits, vegetables and seeds and grains. You can also offer vegetables to nibble on, most commonly leafy greens like lettuces, or fresh pasta.