

Degu

Octodon degus



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Degus are active, social and curious animals that do best with the company of other degus. Originally from the mountains of Chile, wild degus live in huge colonies, where their status is partly determined by the size of their twig mound.



Is a degu the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

- I have an appropriate location and space for a degu.
- I know that male and female degus should not be housed together.
- I will provide daily, supervised time for this degu outside the habitat.
- I can commit to providing proper care for a degu.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered, "Yes" to these statements, a degu may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for degus and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

Average Size 12 inches, including tail

Life Span Up to 9 years with proper care

Diet High-quality, plain guinea pig or chinchilla pellets; provide timothy hay at all times; avoid all sugars, fruit and fatty treats (no sunflower seeds, peanuts, corn or raisins)

Treats, such as dark green leafy vegetables; raw, peeled sweet potatoes (no more than one one-inch cube daily); carrots, pet grass and other green vegetables, should not exceed 10% of total food intake

Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily

Feeding Have food (pellets and hay) always available

Discard food not eaten within 24 hours

Housing Degus do best in temperatures below 70°F with low humidity; habitat should never be in direct sunlight because degus are prone to stress and heat stroke at higher temps

Habitat should be escape-proof and as large as possible; a large multi-tiered habitat is recommended because degus love to jump and play; wire habitats with a solid bottom are required to protect their feet; the space between the wires should be no bigger than one inch; degus will chew even the hardest plastic so do not house in a plastic cage

1–1½ inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes hardwood shavings and pelleted or recycled product; cedar-based products may cause harm and are not recommended; degus can be trained to use a litter box

A large metal exercise wheel with a solid flooring is recommended to avoid foot problems

Different types of small animals should not be housed together

Recommended Supplies

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate size habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate food | <input type="checkbox"/> Chewing sticks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiding places |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Timothy hay | <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about degus | <input type="checkbox"/> Litter box/non-clumping litter | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise wheel |

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Normal Behavior and Interaction

Degus are social creatures and should not be kept alone. Keep in same sex groups - a pair of females is best.

Very active and curious; will accept petting but will rarely stay still for very long; prefer not to be picked up or cuddled

Chew on objects to maintain incisor teeth, which grow constantly; ensure have plenty of chew sticks available

Communicate through a variety of vocal sounds such as a warble, chatter and a loud squeak

Never pick up or restrain a degu by its tail as the tail is quite fragile and will break off easily; never pick up from above as it may startle or frighten the degu

Habitat Maintenance

Scoop litter box daily; change bedding weekly or more often as necessary

Clean the habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and allow to dry completely before placing the degu back into the habitat

Grooming and Hygiene

Degus stay clean and rarely need baths; can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipes; provide a dust bath at least twice a week; remove dust at the end of the day

Consult with a veterinarian if a degu's teeth or nails seem too long

Because all degus are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your degu and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.

Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a degu and should consider not having a degu as a pet. For more information regarding degus and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at <http://www.petco.com/pet care info/companion animal care sheets>.

Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Active, alert, and curious
- Orange teeth and clear eyes
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Healthy fur and walks normally

Common Health Issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Broken or Missing Tail	A degu's tail will release, much like some reptiles, if grabbed or struck.	Do not pick up or restrain degu by its tail. Keep wound clean until healed
Diabetes	Typically caused by eating fruit. Signs include excessive drinking / urination	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.
Diarrhea	Loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to determine cause and treatment.
Mouth Infections	Signs include loss of appetite, inability to swallow food and teeth turning white.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian for treatment.

Red Flags

- Weight loss
- Distressed breathing
- White teeth
- Abnormal hair loss
- Lethargy
- Overgrown teeth
- Diarrhea or dirty bottom
- Excessive thirst

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Sources *Degus, A Complete Owners Manual* by Sharon L. Vanderlip, DVM and Michele Earle-Bridges

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.