

## DEGU CARE GUIDE

### Degus care

Owning and caring for degus is great fun and very rewarding, but it is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment. Did you know degus can live on average 5 – 8 years?

Getting your degu's diet and environment correct is the best way of ensuring a long and healthy life. Here are some guidelines for offering your degus the best care:

- **Degus are very social animals**, living in large colonies in the wild. They should always live in same sex groups or a neutered male with females. They will become very withdrawn instantly when split from their group or companion so always keep the groups together if transporting to the vets, for example.
- **They are extremely vocal** with sounds ranging from a soft, happy warble to a loud squeak which can be repeated for quite some time when angry or frightened.
- **Degus are diurnal** meaning they are awake and active during the daytime.
- **Males are larger than females.** Degus tend to measure 25–31cm (including the tail) and weigh 170–300g.
- **Degus are extremely inquisitive, busy creatures.** The cage should include plenty of things to climb on, such as branches (willow or apple wood), wooden shelves and rope. Tubes, rocks, wooden blocks, terracotta pots, etc., should also be included.
- **Degus should not be housed in cages with wire flooring or shelves. Provide plenty of clean, warm bedding.** The bottom of the cage should be solid and lined with newspaper and a thin layer of bedding, such as hay, peat, paper substrate or natural paper pellet (cat litter). Wood shavings are not advisable as they give off aromatic oils which are harmful to degus.
- **A dust bath** (chinchilla dust/sand) should be provided permanently to ensure their coat stays clean and free from grease. The dust should be sieved on a daily basis as degus often use their dust baths as a toilet.
- **The whole cage should be cleaned at least twice a week.**
- **Check your degus for signs of injury and illness every day.**
  - Check teeth are not becoming overgrown – seek veterinary advice if necessary. The teeth are naturally yellow in colour. This is because an oral enzyme found in their saliva stains a young degu's tooth enamel as the tooth forms. The dark orange colouration is a sign of good health.
  - Check the coat and skin for signs of mites, bald patches, sores or lumps. Seek veterinary advice.

### Diet

- **Degus are unable to digest sugar.** Feeding sugary foods can cause serious health problems such as diabetes and cataracts.
- **Complimentary feeds:** this should be in pellet form with balanced nutrients, rather than a muesli mix, to prevent selective feeding. If feeding a muesli mix, choose a more natural looking mix rather than one which is high in colour (red, green, etc.), as these contain sugars and artificial colourings.
- **Fresh water**, available at all times.
- **Additional feeds, in moderation:** low sugar treats such as washed dandelion leaves, grass, broccoli, herbs. These should be fed only once or twice a week, and in small pieces, about the size of a thumbnail.

Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare, The Broyle, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ.

Tel: (01825) 880467 Fax: (01825) 840995 E-mail: [smallanimals1@raystede.org](mailto:smallanimals1@raystede.org) [www.raystede.org](http://www.raystede.org)

Chief Executive: Nigel Mason. President: Morgan Williams. Registered Charity No. 237696. Registered Office: Raystede, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ. Registered in England No. 816674

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN ADOPTING A RAYSTEDE DEGUS

Adoption Fees: **£10**

(Average daily cost of care for all small animals at Raystede is in excess of £300)



### Rehoming degus

We aim to find the best forever homes for the degus that end up in our care, so we have several **rehoming requirements** to guarantee each degu finds the right home:

- **Degus are always rehomed in pairs, single sex groups, or a neutered male with one or multiple females.** We only rehome single degus as a companion for an existing degu. Males must be neutered before rehoming.

- **A cage of at 90 x 90 x 90cm / 3 x 3 x 3 ft**

The cage should include shelves, a dust bath and plenty of things to explore and climb on. It should not have a wire floor or shelves. The bottom should be solid and lined with newspaper and a thin layer of bedding.

We take particular care where there are children under 7 years to ensure we will find the right match.

### Raystede degus are:

- Health checked by a vet
- Neutered (males only)
- Follow up advice available

### Applying to adopt Raystede degus

Having read this Degu Care Guide, if you are still interested in adopting Raystede degus and feel you can provide the necessary care, please complete an application form.

Before your application is approved, the Small Animals team must approve your degu's accommodation via photos clearly showing their accommodation. Please email photos to [smallanimals1@raystede.org](mailto:smallanimals1@raystede.org) or bring to Customer Services.

If you reserve an animal, we will honour this reserve for up to 2 weeks (excluding exceptional circumstances at staff discretion).

**Thank you for your interest and support. We hope we can help you find some new companions.**