



Sugar Gliders

(Petarus Breviceps)

Care and Information Sheet

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian

Sugar gliders are highly social, nocturnal *marsupials* indigenous to Australia, Indonesia, and New Guinea. They often bond very closely to their caregivers. Sugar gliders' toes and fingers have small pads that help them grasp food and branches as they climb and explore their environment. They are closely related to possums but resemble flying squirrels. They have semi-prehensile tails, opposable thumbs like primates, pouches like a kangaroo, and patagia (gliding membranes) like flying squirrels. They are *not* rodents.



Average Size:	12 inches in length (including the tail) & 90 to 150 grams in weight	Life span:	up to 15+ years
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Is a sugar glider the right pet for you?

(Please check YES or NO after reading each statement)

YES	NO	
		I have an appropriate location and adequate space for a sugar glider ¹ .
		I know that male and female sugar gliders should not be housed together unless the male(s) is/are neutered (<i>unless it is my intention to breed them</i>) ² .
		I can provide daily, supervised time for a sugar glider outside of the habitat.
		I understand a sugar glider's dietary needs and can commit to providing proper care for a sugar glider ³ .
		A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for sugar glider(s) in my home.
		I understand that sugar gliders are not <i>recommended</i> as pets for young children or households with free-ranging, predatory pets (such as cats, dogs, or ferrets) ⁴ .
		I understand that sugar gliders require the care of an experienced, exotic veterinarian and I am willing to accept the moral <i>and</i> financial responsibility for providing medical care for a sugar glider.

Diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a balanced main diet with a 2:1 Calcium:Phosphorous ratio (such as the BML, blended, HPW diet, and others⁵) Provide fresh fruits and vegetables nightly, including items like: papaya, apples, grapes, blueberries, mangoes, bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, peas, green beans, leafy vegetables, corn, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean, fresh water daily Avoid coffee, chocolate, rhubarb, garlic, and most dairy products as these may be toxic or cause serious medical problems
Feeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide fresh food each evening Discard uneaten food each morning Provide a water bottle at all times Providing a 24 hours diet staple item such as a pellet is not necessary but is allowable – it should NOT replace the main diet or the fresh fruits/vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide treats such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pine nuts ✓ Meal worms or crickets ✓ Yogurt drops ✓ Dried fruit
Grooming & Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sugar gliders keep themselves very clean and rarely need baths; clean with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipes, if necessary Trim nails as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because all sugar gliders are potential carriers of infectious diseases, (such as giardia and coccidia), always wash your hands before and after handling your sugar glider and/or the habitat contents, to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.
Normal Behavior & Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nocturnal, sleep through the day and very active at night (feed in evening) Extremely social and it is recommended that they are provided with 2–4 hours of interaction daily, which may include playing outside the cage and/or sleeping in a pouch worn by their caregiver Best when housed as pairs or colonies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with a variety of vocalizations, including “crabbing” – an amazingly loud sound similar to a miniature chain saw which indicates fear or displeasure and “barking” – a sound similar to that made by a Chihuahua Males develop a bald spot on top of their heads as they mature which often diminishes after neutering

¹ See the housing section for more information about minimum habitat sizes and types

² It is generally unacceptable to breed gliders without lineage because of the *possible* resulting health issues and/or possible genetic defects. It is recommended that gliders be bred only if they were bred by reputable breeders and sold with the possibility of them being bred being taken into consideration.

³ see the diet section for more on appropriate sugar glider diets

⁴ Without proper, responsible supervision, young children or other household pets could potentially harm sugar gliders. Caution is advised.

⁵ There are other diets – which diet you feed is largely a matter of personal choice – just keep your gliders' health and nutritional needs in mind at all times when choosing a diet

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



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Housing

- Temperature should range from 70°F to 90°F
- Sugar gliders love to climb and jump, and should have a cage or reptarium that is at least 9 to 10 ½ cubic feet in volume (or more) for housing up to 3 gliders (example: 32" wide by 27" tall by 21" deep or 36" high by 24" wide by 18" deep)
- Aquariums and plastic hamster habitats are **not** acceptable housing for gliders.
- Cages should be escape-proof with bars spaced no wider than ½ inch apart
- Reptariums are not recommended for gliders who are prone to chewing behaviors
- General cage spot cleaning daily or weekly
- 1–2 inches of absorbent bedding material should cover a tray beneath the bottom cage grate/floor for cages – fleece fabric or custom cage liners of polypropylene can be used for the bottoms of reptariums
- Place a fleece pouch or a nest box in the upper area of the cage
- Provide lots of branches, ladders and vines as sugar gliders are very active and love to climb
- Provide lots of toys such as rodent, large bird and cat toys⁶, as well as balls.
- Clean water bottles and food dishes daily
- Major cage sanitizing monthly

Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Healthy fur with no clumping or "cracking"
- Clear eyes
- Alert and sociable
- Ears perky
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Walks normally

Red Flags

- clumping or *extreme* "cracking" of the fur
- weight loss
- dragging hind legs
- eye or nasal discharge
- vomiting
- abnormal hair loss
- lethargy
- diarrhea or dirty bottom
- open wounds
- hissing while urinating or defecating

Common Health Issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Diarrhea	Loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing or other illness.	Consult with a licensed exotic animal veterinarian
Hind Leg Paralysis	Often secondary symptom of bacterial or viral infection. May also be caused by nutritional deficiency. HLP in sugar gliders is not known to be genetic.	Consult with a licensed exotic animal veterinarian
Mites	External parasite causing hair loss and/or compulsive scratching	Consult with a licensed exotic animal veterinarian
Self Mutilation	Chewing on self compulsively, causing injury, often accompanied by a horrible, anguished cry/crabbing noise	Consult with a licensed exotic animal veterinarian

Sources

- *Sugar Gliders: Living with and Caring For Sugar Gliders Is this the Right Pet for You?* A book by Peggy Brewer
- Critter Love™ & The HPW Diet™ Center



For more information about sugar gliders, please visit
www.HammockHavenPetsPlus.com



⁶ Catnip is toxic to sugar gliders – never use cat toys that include catnip as toys for your sugar gliders

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