

SHOPPING LIST:

- ✗ information leaflet about degus
- large cage/terrarium
- nest box
- heavy feeding bowl
- hayrack
- water bottle
- floor covering (e.g. MultiFit straw pellets + straw)
- hay (rich in herbs, dry, dust-free)
- dried herbs
- degu food (premium food)
- sand bath
- chinchilla sand
- mineral stone, salt lick
- bits of wood to chew on (e.g. wooden gnawing block, wicker bridge)
- roots, tubes, ferret castle
- little twigs and stones
- nibble sticks
- brush
- cage cleaning materials
- disinfectant/detergent for the cage
- vitamin supplements
- intestinal conditioner (for the prevention of diarrhoea)
- book about degus

For more tips and further information on degus visit our website at: www.maxizoo.ie

REPRODUCTION

1. Degus are fully grown at around 6 months yet many animals have already reached sexual maturity at 6-7 weeks.
2. The sexual cycle is irregular, ovulation is triggered off by the presence of a male.
3. The gestation period is 87 - 93 days.
4. A litter can consist of 1-10 young.
5. The baby degus can be separated from the mother at 6 weeks.



Since degus have very delicate bowels, any change in their diet should be introduced very slowly. The food bowl must be firmly fixed in place or very heavy so that it cannot be knocked over.

WHAT DO I LIKE TO EAT?

Degus are herbivores who feed on sparse grass, bark and seeds in their natural habitat. Therefore, fresh, coarse hay and herbs should form the basis of their diet. Since degus eat small amounts frequently every day, the hay in the cage must always be in good condition. A small portion of prepared degu food can be given on top of this every day. Dandelion, apple, carrots or wild meadow herbs are suitable fresh foods.

Degus should not be given any nuts that are high in fat (e.g. sunflower seeds or peanuts), or any fruit or snacks that contain sugar. Dried rose hips or herbs (nettles, fennel, mint or similar) are suitable for giving as special treats.

The best way of supplying water is in a rodent drip feed bottle and the water should always be fresh and freely available.

KEEP ME FIT AND HEALTHY

You can tell if a degu is healthy by its clear eyes, dry nostrils and clean and shiny coat. The length of the claws and teeth should be monitored regularly.

Degus take exceptionally good care of their coats and clean themselves frequently. Once tamed they can even be combed carefully with a soft brush. The coat should be examined daily for damage, small lumps or encrustations.

The rodent's front teeth must be worn down by food rich in crude fibre and branches otherwise the continual growth of the teeth may lead to defective positioning and damage to the mouth's mucous membrane.

Degus are also very susceptible to intestinal illnesses which are mainly caused by unsuitable food or a sudden change in diet. These can be fatal.

Stale (even buried) food must be removed from the cage regularly.

Since degus are prone to diabetes, they must not be given any food containing sugar.

Degus displaying any signs of illness should be taken to a vet immediately, because any delay in treatment can very quickly lead to the animal's death.



My degu

Everything you need to know about degus as pets.

Everything for your pet



www.maxizoo.ie

AM I THE RIGHT PET FOR YOU?

Degus have been kept as pets for a good 10 years. They are very animated and inquisitive rodents with an extremely pronounced gnawing instinct, that is to say they gnaw absolutely everything which can reduce their teeth to next to nothing. However, they are very social and active during the day and this makes them ideal pets for slightly older children. If they are well looked after they can live for 6-10 years.

WHERE DO I ORIGINATE FROM?

Degus originate from North and Central Chile and occupy an ecological niche there that is similar to the European wild rabbit. Up to 10 animals live together in family groups that claim and defend their own territory. In turn, these family groups form large colonies. The families have a burrow that they retreat to at night. High-ranking males build what is known as a "commander's mound" next to the burrow and the height of the mound reflects the rank of the male. If the mound is destroyed the male also loses his rank.



WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE FOR ME TO LIVE?

Degus are very inquisitive, active, have an extremely sociable nature and therefore need the largest and most diverse cage possible. The larger the cage, the better the degus feel. Since degus gnaw absolutely everything made of plastic or wood (they even gnaw away at thin metal plate), the entire cage should be made of metal or glass (e.g. a terrarium or aquarium). It is extremely important that aquariums are well ventilated. The cage must contain a nest box, drinking bottle, heavy ceramic

HEALTH CHECKLIST

My degu is healthy if

- the eyes are not weepy or inflamed,
- there are no visible bite anomalies (e.g. the incisors are too long) and the degu is able to chew normally,
- it has a dry snout and doesn't sneeze,
- the coat is smooth and shiny and smells of fresh hay or straw,
- the area around the anus is clean and free of encrustations,
- the soles of the feet are neither crusted nor heavily stained by urine, the claws are not too long,
- you cannot feel any lumps, swelling or scabs,
- the degu is lively and has a healthy appetite.

feeding bowl, hay rack and sand bath (with special chinchilla sand). Pet sawdust is best for covering the floor of the cage.

The creatures also need branches and stones for climbing and gnawing, as well as places to hide in and materials for building their "commander's mound".

The cage should be placed somewhere dry and draught-free.

A location that enjoys the rising and setting sun is preferable.

The cage and all accessories should be cleaned and disinfected regularly (at least once

a week). However, during cleaning the "commander's mound" must be left standing, since destruction results in unnecessary stress within the community.



HOW I SHOULD BE HANDLED?

Approach the degu slowly from the front and gently speak to it at eye level without handling it. Hold out something healthy for it to nibble and you will quickly succeed in gaining the trust of this cute little animal. Its curiosity drives the degu to approach your hand totally voluntarily and it will nibble from the proffered snack. Depending on the individual degu it can take days and even weeks to progress from hand feeding to delicate stroking to taking it out of its cage. Degus are not suitable to leave running around freely because they chew at everything and are extremely difficult to catch. Degus should always be picked up with two hands (one positioned carefully



yet firmly around the ribcage, the other supporting the hind-quarters). You must never pick up a degu by the tail under any circumstances, because the skin of the tail will tear off immediately.

The more time you spend with your degu, the tamer it will become and the more it will enjoy human contact.

Many degus go into shock when confronted with stressful situations. If this happens the degu must be put back into its cage straightaway, until it has recovered.

Children should only practise picking up and carrying their pet under the supervision of their parents or Maxi zoo staff when making the purchase.

DO I LIKE COMPANY?

Degus are very companionable creatures with pronounced social behaviour. If they are kept on their own they pine away and so must be kept in pairs at the very least.

The simplest course of action is to keep degus of the same sex, who have known each other from a very young age, together in one cage. However, a large group of females and castrated males is also appropriate to the species. The integration of older animals can only be practised outside of the animal's territory (e.g. in a new, neutral cage). To avoid breeding in communities of mixed sexes, the males should be castrated.