

Fancy Mice

Mus musculus domesticus



LIFE SPAN: 1.5 - 3 years
AVERAGE SIZE: 3-4 inches



written by an expert in the pet care industry and approved by a qualified exotic veterinarian

the information on this care sheet is a basic overview and not a substitute for veterinary care. For more information and to find a qualified exotic mammal veterinarian, go to www.AEMV.org

WILD HISTORY: Fancy mice are originally domestic house mice that have been selectively bred for desirable characteristics. Fancy mice have been bred and shown in competitions for centuries. The mouse is first mentioned in a Chinese text from 1100 BC.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Mice can only see in black and white. Although they can't distinguish colors, they have highly developed night vision. Though we typically think of pet mice as white with red eyes, selective breeding has created many different colors and markings, in a wide range of sizes. There are now over eight hundred known variants. The athletic mouse can jump up to 13 inches high, run along narrow wires and up rough vertical surfaces, and squeeze through opening not much larger than one quarter inch diameter.

NORMAL BEHAVIOR & INTERACTION: Mice are very social and engaging and are generally very gregarious. Fancy mice are happiest living in groups of two or more. It is sometimes difficult to introduce new mice to each other, so it is best to purchase them at the same time from the same cage at the pet store. Male mice do not get along well together unless they are siblings and purchased at the same time; also make sure to select a cage large enough to give them separate living spaces. Female mice will generally get along well. Do not keep males and females together as they reproduce readily. Fancy mice are easily tamed, even if they are difficult at first. The more you handle and work with your mouse, the tamer it will become. Any animal can bite in defense if it feels threatened. You might want to interact with your mouse after dusk, as it will be more willing to cooperate since it is nocturnal (most active at night). Place your mouse's cage in a place in the home where it will be around the family, yet protected from direct light, drafts and excess noise during the day. Also be sure it is high enough to be out of reach of dog noses and small children's hands. Mice are prey animals and can feel threatened by large bodies looming above them or in their faces.

DIET: Mice are omnivores (vegetarians / grain eaters) and will eat an occasional insect such as crickets or mealworms

FEEDING: Commercially prepared mouse diets are available. Plain, pellet "rodent block" diets are best, as they offer a complete balanced diet. Diets that include seeds and treats seem to be nicer for your pet, but many mice will only pick out the treats and not eat the pellets. This may result in malnutrition and obesity. You can feed seeds as a treat for your pet and use them for training and taming purposes. Be sure to replenish the food in your mouse's cage often.

FRESH FOODS: Healthy, fresh fruits, vegetables and grains can also be fed to your mouse. Offer these treats in small amounts, as they may cause diarrhea if fed in too great an amount.

**** Please avoid feeding sugary treats such as yogurt drops or honey sticks to your mouse. These treats contain far too much sugar and can lead to illness.**

SUPPLEMENTS: If fed a balanced diet, supplements are not necessary for your mouse.

WATER: Clean, fresh water must always be available and should be changed daily. All water should ideally be free of fluorine, chlorine and heavy metals. We recommend that you use unflavored bottled drinking water or bottled natural spring water. If tap water is used, you should treat it with a water conditioner. If you do not want to chemically de-chlorinate the water, you can leave an open container of tap water out for at least 24 hours with exposure to ultraviolet light. Do not use distilled water, which can cause severe medical problems, since it lacks minerals that are essential to important body functions.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES:

- Cage
- Water bottle
- Food bowl
- Food
- Bedding
- Hide house
- Running Wheel
- Chew toys

HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT: Many different types of rodent cages are available at the pet store. Do not buy the smallest cages thinking that because the pet is small, it does not need much room. Mice love to run and explore. A larger cage will allow them to create several "rooms" as mice will do. They like to have separate bedrooms, food storage areas and play areas. A ten-gallon glass tank is an excellent sized cage for two to three mice. These cages will allow you to choose different toys and hiding places that can be interchanged within the cage. Choose several hiding places, a solid walled plastic wheel and chew toys. Small cardboard boxes will also be appreciated. When designing your cage set-up, be sure to include a mesh wire top for the cage that can be secured snugly with cage "locks". Mice can find a way to escape if it is possible. The plastic cages with tube accessories are also excellent cages that mice usually enjoy. Your mouse will undoubtedly chew on parts of this type of cage, so monitor the cage daily so your pet does not chew an escape hole.

HIDE HOUSE: The hide house is extremely important to your mouse, and will most likely become your pet's main 'bedroom'. Two to three (depending on cage size and

number of mice) will be appreciated even more. Mice will not often relieve themselves inside the hide house or 'nest', so it is not necessary to disturb the nest to clean it daily. Cleaning of the hide house can be done during the more intensive bi-weekly cleaning.

WATER BOTTLE: A full water bottle must be available at all times, refill it daily. Be sure to clean out the inside of the bottle thoroughly during the more intensive cage cleaning sessions every week. Water bottles will often become slimy inside, which will in turn harbor harmful bacteria. Your pet will most likely chew a bottle inside the cage, so be sure to attach the bottle to the outside of the cage. Check the straw daily for any blockages to make sure your pet always has access to the fresh water. If you cannot place the bottle on the outside of the cage, purchase a metal water bottle guard. This will keep him or her from getting to the bottle.

BEDDING: We recommend an aspen bedding or soft recycled newspaper bedding such as "Carefresh". Neither of these choices will cause allergic reactions or respiratory distress *and* it is easy to clean. **DO NOT use cedar chips, as they contain dangerous phenols, which are toxic to your pet.** Place enough bedding in the cage so your pet can happily tunnel underneath it. Spot clean your pet's cage daily by simply removing the soiled portions of bedding.

CAGE TEMPS: normal room temperature (60-70F).

TOYS: Several types of toys should be available to your mouse. Chewing toys such as wooden small mammal toys (available at the pet store), hide houses, wheels (with solid running area), cardboard boxes, paper towel tubes and untreated dried fruit tree branches are all excellent toys for your mouse. Mice must chew constantly in order to wear their teeth down, which grow on a continual basis. Therefore, toys that allow your pet to chew and wear those teeth down are invaluable. Stick to toys bought at the pet store, as these are generally made of pet-safe materials.

HABITAT MAINTENANCE: Daily maintenance should consist of spot cleaning by removing soiled substrate, cleaning water bowl thoroughly and wiping glass clean. The entire cage should be cleaned thoroughly at least once every month with:

- A mild dishwashing liquid in warm water
- Vinegar & water (1:8) or bleach and warm water (1:32)
- Cage "furniture" should also be scrubbed clean with the same dilution.
- Rinse off all soap and bleach thoroughly with plain water before re-introducing your pet to its enclosure.
- NEVER MIX VINEGAR AND BLEACH - IT CREATES A TOXIC SOLUTION

GROOMING & HYGIENE: It is not necessary to clean or bathe your mice. They are extremely neat and will groom themselves! If it seems as if your pet has not been grooming him or herself, he may be ill.

SIGNS OF A HEALTHY ANIMAL: Healthy mice have a rounded, full body and smooth, even fur with no bald patches. The nostrils, under-tail area, under-chin area, ears and eyes should be clear and free of discharge - fur should not be damp or stained in any way. Your pet should have bright eyes; teeth should be even and well aligned with no staining around the chin; breathing should be even and not labored, with no wheezing or gurgling sounds. Healthy mice are very energetic and busy, although they are nocturnal and may be caught napping during the day. We recommend physical exams every year with an exotic pet veterinarian. If

your vet sees your pet regularly, many common conditions that afflict your pet can be caught and treated early.

SOME COMMON PROBLEMS THAT REWQUIRE VETERINARY EVALUATION INCLUDE:

HEALTH ISSUE:	PHYSICAL SIGNS:
Respiratory Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased respiratory rate or effort • Watery eyes, nose • Lethargy • Reduced appetite, weight
Tumors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lumps (often developing often on side of body or under belly)
Mites, lice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of hair • Bare spots on skin or small red sores • Scratching
Traumatic injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open wounds • Lameness
Overgrown teeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drooling • Bleeding from mouth • Inability to eat

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