CARING FOR YOUR MOUSE

FOOD & WATER

FOOD

Chow down

Being omnivores, mice eat both plant and animal foods. Feed yours a staple diet of pelleted food made for mice. Pellets are a complete, balanced diet and should be available to them all the time.

Provide a small amount of vegetables, greens, fruits and seeds every day, too. Mice crave variety! Be sure to remove any uneaten fresh food the next day so it doesn't spoil and make them sick.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mice have continuously growing front teeth. Because of this, they must gnaw on abrasive foods and materials to help them wear their teeth down. It's really important to follow a proper diet and give them things to chew!

Snack time

Mice love treats! Foods such as unsweetened whole grain cereals, nuts and scrambled egg make great snacks. Just don't feed too many or you'll end up with overweight mice.

WHAT ABOUT MIXES?

Some diets sold for mice contain a mix of foods like seeds, dried fruits and corn. The problem with these diets is that mice can pick and choose what they like, which means they won't get all the nutrients they need, even if the diet is advertised as "complete."

WATER

Mice need water available to them all the time. Fill your mice's sipper bottle with clean, fresh water every day. Once a week, clean the bottle using soap and water and rinse well before refilling.

Avoid water dishes. Mice tend to bury them as they dig, creating a soggy mess.

HANDLING

Handle with care

You can pick up your mice by putting cupped hands near them and letting them crawl into your hands. Be careful not to squeeze. Not all mice enjoy being held and they may try to leap from your hands.

Hands off tails!

Mice should never be picked up by their tail. It's uncomfortable and stressful for them.

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CARING FOR YOUR MOUSE
HOME ENVIRONMENT

Mice are active animals requiring a large habitat. The more space, the better!

Your mice's living space should include:

- Areas for your mice to hide
- Opportunities to dig, chew and explore

WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO PUT YOUR MICE' S HOME?

Keep the cage in an area protected from cold drafts and direct sunlight, as well as bright lights and loud noises.

HABITAT OPTIONS

Mice are burrowers so a deep enclosure with a solid bottom is best. A 40 gallon aquarium with a wire mesh lid works well for a pair of mice. Aquariums are secure and can easily be filled with burrowing material.

For bedding, use wood shavings such as aspen, shredded paper or recycled paper bedding (or a mix of all three!). Don't use cedar or pine shavings because they can cause health problems.

Provide a deep layer of bedding to allow your mice to burrow. Clean the cage several times a week to keep your mice healthy. Ammonia from urine can irritate their lungs and lead to illness.

Adding small houses, ropes, hanging toys, ramps, hammocks, ladders, tunnels, tubes and a solid (not wire) exercise wheel provides stimulation and places to hide and sleep. Swap items in and out to keep your mice's home interesting. Scatter or hang nesting material like toilet paper for your mice to gather. Mice love to build nests!

Other habitat options include a long glass IKEA® cabinet turned on its side (though you'll need to make your own secure, well-ventilated lid for this).

Aquariums can be quite expensive. The good news is you don't need a brand new one to create a comfortable, stimulating home for your mice. A used aquarium will do – and costs a lot less. It doesn't need to hold water so leaks don't matter! You can look through online ads or check out garage sales for used tanks.

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CARING FOR YOUR MOUSE
EXERCISE & PLAY

TOYS & GAMES

Mice require daily exercise and will happily explore a playpen made just for them. A wading pool or a bathtub (drain closed!) lined with a towel works well. Fill with safe objects to climb on, over and through to keep your mice busy and interested. Paper bags, cereal boxes, paper cups, toilet paper rolls and untreated wood are good choices. Always supervise playtime.

Which wheel?
When choosing a wheel, solid surfaces (like all-plastic wheels) are safer and more comfortable than wire ones, which can hurt mouse feet. As for size, when mice run, their back shouldn't be arched into a U-shape – that means the wheel is too small. Running like that can hurt their back.

SINGLE OR SOCIAL?

Female mice shouldn't be kept alone. Two or more can live together provided they're the same sex and have a large enough living space. To help prevent squabbles, female mice kept in pairs should come from the same litter or be introduced to each other when they're very young.

Male mice are prone to fighting and should be housed by themselves.

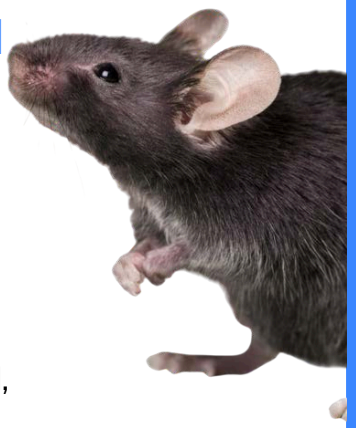
Happy to hide!
Being a prey species, mice tend to avoid open areas, so be sure to add lots of hiding places in their living space and exercise area.

FIRST ADOPTION OPTION

Interested in adding mice to your family? *Make adoption your first option!* BC SPCA Community Animal Centres often have mice available for adoption.

Benefits of adoption from the BC SPCA:

- In-Centre physical exam performed by staff
- Medical treatment by a veterinarian, if required, while in care



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CARING FOR YOUR MOUSE
HEALTH

A HEALTHY MOUSE

- ☑ Eyes are clean and bright
- ☑ Ears are clean with no discharge or unpleasant odour
- ☑ Coat is smooth and shiny
- ☑ Nose is clean with no discharge or redness
- ☑ Not too fat or too thin

MEDICAL CARE

Mice are a prey species. This means they tend to hide their symptoms when they're not feeling well. Watch out for changes to your mice's eating habits and other changes in their behaviour and routines. If you notice something different, contact a veterinarian. Mice usually live for one to three years.

DENTAL CARE

To help wear down their ever-growing front teeth, provide your mice with chewing items such as cardboard, Timothy hay, wooden toys, and willow and apple sticks. Make sure the branches come from trees that haven't been treated with any chemicals.

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

Compared to female mice, male mice have a strong, musky odour. The reason? Males scent mark their environment with urine. You can reduce (but not eliminate) the smell by cleaning your mouse's cage regularly. Keep in mind, though, the more you clean their enclosure, the more they will scent mark – making the smell even stronger! Also, cleaning too often can be stressful on mice. The key is to find a balance between a little odour and a healthy environment for your mice.

TOO MANY MICE!

Mice in shelters and rescues across B.C. are in need of new homes. *Try to make adoption your first option if you love mice!*

PREVENT UNWANTED LITTERS

Never keep male and female mice together, even for a short period. Mice multiply at an amazing rate. Females can have up to 10 litters in just one year, with anywhere from three to 12 young per litter. Baby mice need to be separated by sex at five weeks of age before they begin breeding.

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