

Degus

Octodon degus



Approximate life span: 6-8 years
Estimated adult size: 200-400 grams
Difficulty Level: Advanced



Degus, sometimes called the common degu, are a rodent species native to Chile. They are most active in the morning and evenings. Degus should be offered a sand bath a few times a week to help maintain their coat. It is important to never grab a degu by the tail because the skin and tuft is easily shed as a defense mechanism against predators. This can be painful and, unlike reptiles, does not grow back.

HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

Degus are highly social animals and should not be housed alone. Introduce new degus in neutral territory before housing together. Degus require well-ventilated cages of metal or glass as they chew constantly and will escape from plastic enclosures. Degus will enjoy creating nests and burrows from paper and bedding. Offer a nest box of wood or cardboard. These will need to be replaced frequently as they are destroyed. Most will also benefit from an exercise wheel.

DIETARY NEEDS

Hay: Degus need free access to grass hay at all times to promote dental and GI health.

Pellets: Degus should be fed a high quality timothy-based chinchilla pellet. Degus are prone to diabetes so avoid pellets with added sugar, grains, seeds, fruits, and nuts as these are too high in fats and carbs.

Treats: Offer fresh greens but avoid starchy vegetables and fruits since degus are intolerant to dietary sugars.

Chewing: Because their teeth never stop growing, wood sticks, blocks, and shelves provide a variety of ways to wear their teeth down to prevent dental disease.

RECOMMENDED VETERINARY CARE

- Annual exams
- Common illness: diabetes, pneumonia, tail slip, injuries from fall or escape