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