

Caring for Your Pet Sugar Glider

Caging and Bedding:

- Sugar gliders like to climb and do best in multi-level cages. The bottom of the cage should be lined with recycled paper bedding. Sugar gliders are nocturnal, so the cage should be in a part of the house where they won't be disturbed during the day.
- Fleece pouches or nest boxes should be provided for sleeping. If you have multiple animals in one cage, you may need multiple hiding spots so that all of your animals have a place that they feel safe.

Food and Water:

- The diet of wild sugar gliders is very complex and difficult to replicate in captivity. We recommend feeding a combination of Leadbeater's mixture, insects, fresh produce, and nuts. *See recommended diet and greens below.*
- Food should be offered in the evening. Sugar gliders can be messy eaters, so some people recommend using a shoe box to make a "dining room" within the cage.
- Fresh water should always be available in a bottle and should be changed daily.

Activity and Enrichment:

- Sugar gliders are a social species and will often develop problems with self-mutilation if housed alone. Sugar gliders do best in family groups of 2-6 animals. If you are going to keep a mixed-sex group of sugar gliders, you will need to neuter the males to prevent reproduction (spaying females is not recommended in most cases).
- Sugar gliders require significant socialization in order to make good pets. They should be handled for at least 30 minutes every day. Try to handle them in the evening to avoid interrupting their sleep during the day.
- If you are going to let your sugar gliders out of their cage for supervised exercise time, make sure that you do this in a secure space without any crevices that they can hide or get stuck in; sugar gliders can move very quickly if they get away from you!
- Some sugar gliders enjoy running on exercise wheels, but be sure to use one with solid sides so that their feet can't get stuck.

Veterinary Care:

- Sugar gliders should have yearly veterinary exams to evaluate their overall health and well-being. It is very difficult to do an exam on a sugar glider that is not accustomed to being handled, so please help your veterinarian by socializing your animals well at home. Your veterinarian may recommend sedating your pet so that he/she can do a more thorough exam.
- Signs that your sugar glider is sick include a decreased appetite, lethargy, sneezing or nasal discharge, ocular discharge, itchiness, or any lumps on the body.
- Low blood sugar: Sugar gliders that aren't feeling well often stop eating and can run out of energy reserves very quickly. Your sugar glider should be seen right away if he/she stops eating, especially if you notice weakness, tremors, or seizures. Similar symptoms can be seen with low calcium, which is also an emergency.
- Self-mutilation: Sugar gliders are very prone to self-mutilation when stressed or in pain. They can do a significant amount of damage in a very short time, so please seek veterinary attention right away if you notice that your sugar glider is injuring itself.

Sugar Glider Diet

Wild sugar gliders are omnivorous and eat a wide variety of foods, including saps and gums from acacia and eucalyptus trees, nectar, pollen, fruits, and insects. This diet is very difficult to replicate in captivity, and this has led to a lot of controversy about what is appropriate to feed sugar gliders. Pelleted diets are available, but it is unclear whether these diets meet all of the animals' nutritional needs. Many websites recommend feeding only fruits and sugar syrups; these diets are not nutritionally balanced and can lead to weak bones, tremors, seizures, and death. We recommend the following diet for your pet sugar gliders:

Leadbeater's Mixture (~60%): This mixture was initially developed for use in Leadbeater's possums, whose natural diets are similar to those of sugar gliders. There are a number of different recipes; the one that we recommend is included below. The diet is made up in advance and frozen in ice cube trays, then thawed just before use. Feed about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ of a cube per sugar glider per day.

Pelleted omnivore diet (~30%): Offer a small amount (~1 tsp) of a commercial omnivore diet, such as Mazuri or Zupreem.

Vegetables, Fruits, Nuts (~10%): Offer small amounts of fresh vegetables, fruits, and tree nuts daily (2-3 tsp/sugar glider/day). Mealworms can be offered occasionally as treats.

Modified Leadbeater's Mixture Recipe:

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup apple juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey

1 hard-boiled egg (shell removed)

4 oz. Mixed Fruit Yogurt Gerber Juice

1 tsp. Rep-Cal Herpivite Vitamin Supplement (blue label)

2 tsps. Rep-Cal Calcium Supplement Non-Phosphorous with Vitamin D3 (pink label)

2- 0.5 oz. jars of chicken baby food

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup wheat germ

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry baby cereal (mixed or oatmeal)

Directions:

Blend the honey, egg, and apple juice in a blender until smooth. Turn off the blender and add the Gerber juice and Rep-cal Herpivite Vitamin Supplement. Blend until smooth and then turn off blender. Add the Rep-cal Calcium Supplement, the chicken baby food, wheat germ, and dry baby cereal. One last time, blend until smooth, and pour into ice cube trays, filling each compartment only halfway and place into the freezer.

Greens

Greens are a very important part of your pet sugar glider's diet. They provide important nutrients, increase water intake, and help provide interesting variety in your pet's diet. We generally recommend feeding about ½ cup of greens per two pounds bodyweight daily. If your pet is not accustomed to eating greens, you should introduce them slowly to prevent diarrhea.

Recently, there has been a lot of interest in the role that the mineral content of greens plays in the development of urinary tract disease in small mammals. The focus has been primarily on calcium and oxalates, since these are the common components of urinary stones in small mammals. In general, we recommend feeding greens that are lower in calcium and oxalates as the basis of your pet's salad and rotating through the higher calcium/oxalate greens in smaller quantities, unless otherwise directed by your veterinarian. The calcium and oxalate contents of common greens are listed below. If your pet has a history of urinary problems, consider misting the greens with water before serving to increase water intake.

Vegetable	Calcium ¹	Oxalate ²
Arugula	Low	Low
Basil	Low	Moderate
Beet Greens	Low	High
Bibb/Boston Lettuce	Very low	Very low
Bok Choy	Moderate	Low
Cilantro	Very low	Very low
Collards	Moderate	Low
Curly Endive	Low	Medium
Dandelion Greens	Very high	High
Dill	Very low	Low
Green Leaf Lettuce	Very low	Very low
Kale	Moderate	Moderate
Mustard Greens	Moderate	Low
Mustard Spinach	Extremely high	Very high
Parsley	High	Moderate
Radicchio	Very low	Low
Red Leaf Lettuce	Very low	Very low
Romaine	Very low	Very low
Spinach	Low	Very high
Swiss Chard	Very low	Very high
Turnip Greens	Very high	Low
Watercress	Low	Low

¹ Compiled from nutritiondata.com

² Compiled from lowoxalateinfo.com

