Mouse Care Guide

15-page illustrated guide | Group housing, safe habitats, nutrition and health



Pet mice need secure, well-ventilated housing, daily observation, species-appropriate food, nesting enrichment and a veterinarian familiar with small rodents.

A practical, species-specific guide for responsible ownership in the United States. Use it alongside an experienced small-mammal veterinarian and current local rules.

1 | Is a mouse right for you?

Mice are small, active and often most enjoyable to observe. Their average lifespan is roughly 18–24 months. They need daily food and water checks, careful handling, a secure habitat and quick veterinary attention because illness can progress rapidly.

– They are quick and delicate, so may not suit frequent carrying.

– Scent and urine marking are normal; regular cleaning is essential.

– Find a vet who sees mice before you bring them home.

2 | Selecting mice and choosing a group

Female mice generally can live in compatible groups; adult males often fight if housed together, though carefully managed exceptions exist. Ask an experienced rescue or veterinarian about sexing, group compatibility and introductions. Look for clear eyes, smooth coat, comfortable breathing and active movement.

– Never mix sexes without a deliberate veterinary and breeding plan.

– Do not house mice with rats or other rodent species.

– Quarantine new arrivals and seek professional guidance before introductions.

3 | Secure habitat and location

Choose a spacious, escape-proof habitat with excellent ventilation, a solid floor and secure lid. Provide multiple hides, nesting material, climbing structures and a safe exercise wheel with a solid running surface. Place it away from direct sun, drafts, kitchens, smoke and predator pets.

– Avoid narrow bars or gaps that allow escape.

– Aquariums require a secure ventilated lid and close attention to airflow.

– Keep habitat in a quiet room with stable temperature.

4 | Deep bedding and nesting

Provide enough unscented, low-dust bedding for digging and nesting. Paper-based materials are a common safe option; avoid cedar and strongly aromatic substrates. Offer shredded plain paper and cardboard tubes. Spot-clean daily and fully refresh bedding as needed without leaving waste to build up.

– Avoid fluffy cotton nesting that can wrap around limbs or be swallowed.

– Clean food bowls and check the water bottle daily.

– Retain a small amount of clean familiar nesting material after full cleans.

5 | Nutrition and feeding routine

Offer a complete commercial mouse diet with fresh water always available. Small amounts of safe fresh produce may be offered as enrichment, but keep the staple balanced and treats limited. Mice should not receive unprescribed vitamins, human supplements, or spoiled food.

– Check water-bottle function daily; a second source can be useful during outages.

– Avoid sticky sweets and sudden large diet changes.

– Store food dry and discard stale or contaminated portions.

6 | Enrichment and activity

Mice benefit from nesting, climbing, chewing, exploring and foraging. Rotate cardboard tunnels, hides, platforms and safe chew items. Use a wheel sized and designed to keep the back straight and prevent feet from slipping through rungs. Supervise any play outside the habitat in a secure pen.

– Avoid exercise balls and open-room play.

– Remove damaged plastic or sharp-edged items.

– Allow hiding places so mice can retreat when startled.

7 | Handling and taming

Begin with quiet presence and treats offered near the habitat. Scoop gently in cupped hands or use a tunnel or cup for transfer. Do not lift by the tail tip or grab from above if the mouse is fearful. Children should sit on the floor with an adult supervising every contact.

– Keep sessions short and calm.

– Avoid waking a sleeping mouse abruptly.

– Wash hands after handling or cleaning.

8 | Cleaning and grooming

Healthy mice groom themselves. Keep the enclosure dry, wash dishes, remove spoiled food, and spot-clean urine-soiled corners. Check coat, skin, eyes, feet and tail during brief handling. Bathing is usually unnecessary and can chill or stress a mouse; ask a veterinarian about unusual contamination or skin concerns.

– Do not use scented sprays or household cleaners inside the habitat.

– Never apply flea treatments or human medication without a vet.

– Watch for persistent scratching, hair loss or scabs.

9 | Veterinary prevention

Schedule an initial check after adoption and ask a veterinarian experienced with mice how often to return. An annual exam is a useful starting point for a healthy adult, with earlier or more frequent care when age or health warrants it. No routine vaccines are generally given to pet mice.

– Keep a small weight and symptom log.

– Ask the clinic about emergency hours and safe transport.

– Bring a photo of the habitat and food label to appointments.

10 | Illness signs and urgent care

Call promptly for reduced appetite, weight loss, hunched posture, lethargy, labored or noisy breathing, rough coat, diarrhea, wounds, swelling, head tilt, unusual urine or droppings, or persistent discharge. Collapse, severe breathing trouble, seizures or major bleeding are emergencies. Do not wait for a small animal to become visibly very ill.

– Keep an ill mouse warm and quiet while arranging care.

– Avoid force-feeding or giving medication without veterinary direction.

– Describe group members and recent changes to the clinic.

11 | Approximate costs

Costs depend on region and habitat choice. Plan around $100–$300+ for a secure enclosure and initial supplies, $20–$50 monthly for food, bedding and enrichment for a small group, and $50–$150+ for a routine veterinary exam. Annual costs can reach several hundred dollars before diagnostics or emergency treatment; obtain local clinic estimates.

– Budget for the group and a separate veterinary reserve.

– Check whether clinics treat mice before adoption.

– Insurance may not be available; compare terms and save for care.

12 | Children and household pets

Mice are easy to startle and can escape through tiny gaps. Adults should handle daily care and closely supervise a child’s interaction. Cats, dogs, snakes and ferrets can injure mice or cause chronic stress; keep the cage secure and in a room where predator animals cannot paw at it.

– Use handwashing and avoid face-to-face contact.

– Never let another pet sniff or paw at a mouse.

– Secure the lid after every feeding or cleaning.

13 | Travel and sitter plan

A healthy mouse is usually best left in its familiar enclosure with a responsible sitter for short trips. Explain food, water checks, room temperature, cleaning and signs that require a call. Use a secure ventilated carrier for a move or vet visit, with familiar bedding and protection from temperature extremes.

– Leave emergency vet contacts and written authorization.

– Never leave the cage in direct sun or a parked vehicle.

– Check that water cannot leak or run dry during travel.

Sources and further reading

This is an original educational guide, not a reproduction of the requested book. The supplied eBay item number is included for reference; listing title, author, and edition could not be independently confirmed. Consult an experienced veterinarian for individual care decisions.

– User-supplied eBay listing

– Merck Veterinary Manual: Providing a Home for Mice

– Merck Veterinary Manual: Routine Health Care of Mice

– Merck Veterinary Manual: Selecting a Mouse

– Merck Veterinary Manual: Mice and Rats as Pets