Exercise Tips by Small Pet Species

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

the importance of exercise

Small pets are tiny bundles of energy. Thankfully, exercising your small pet is easy (and much more advanced than an old, squeaky wheel). Know your pet's instinctive urges (to run, chew, jump, climb, etc.), then obtain the proper accessories to make exercise fun and natural. Change toys regularly for variety.

Many small pets happily climb on their wire cages. Pets in smooth-sided enclosures enjoy ramps and elevated platforms. Exercise wheels are also very popular, as many small pets expend energy by running. Wheels must be an appropriate size and solid or mesh construction to prevent back, foot, and tail injury.

Tips for exercising your furry friend:

Mice, rats, and hamsters adore exercise wheels, small cardboard boxes and tubes, and tunnels.

Gerbils enjoy wheels, seesaws, tunnels, and Run-About Balls. As with all small animals, avoid plastic chew toys, which can irritate or block intestines if ingested.

Chinchillas should have an exercise wheel, plus they also enjoy exploring enclosed, chinchilla-proof areas; and taking dust baths.

Hedgehogs appreciate high-sided play areas and exercise pens. Provide exercise wheels or balls, tunnels, and solid rubber toys. Some hedgehogs also enjoy splashing in shallow pans of water.

Sugar Gliders thrive on altitude, so place toys like nontoxic wood branches, exercise wheels, rope toys, and wooden toys near the top of the cage when possible.

Guinea pigs, whether playing indoors or outdoors in a shaded exercise pen, enjoy seesaws, wobble toys, paper bags, cardboard tubes, and tunnels.

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Ferrets love to explore - whether in the Ferret Nation, or a ferret-proofed room. Caged ferrets should play outside the cage at least 1-2 hours daily.

Rabbits enjoy having the run of the (rabbit-proofed) house. When you can't supervise play, fill the cage with hay-filled tubes, paper for shredding, untreated wood, and "tossable" toys like Bunny Flip & Toss toy.

To provide a maximum amount of roaming space for your pet, you may want to consider an exercise pen. Your rabbit will have much more room to get exercise. It is also less likely that your pet will suffer from the health conditions resulting from being cramped up in a small cage, such as arthritis, overgrown toenails, boredom, and depression. If you choose a pen, it is a good idea to place it in an area with easy-to-clean flooring like linoleum, wood, tile, or laminate. You will still need to provide a covered area, such as a crate, cardboard box, or hideout so that your pet has a place to retreat for privacy.

Since some rabbits can jump very high and may scale an exercise pen, always supervise your pet. Even if you think your rabbit is incapable of escaping the pen, it's a good idea to place it in an area of your home that is fully "rabbit-proof." This means taking measures to make sure your rabbit cannot chew or ingest electrical cords, toxic plants, carpets, furniture, etc., or that he cannot squeeze into gaps behind furniture or appliances.

WE RECOMMEND

Bunny Flip & Toss

Chewbular Play Tube

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