**SUGAR GLIDER CARE GUIDE**

**Housing**

**CAGE**

**SIZE:** Sugar gliders require quite a bit of space. Although they are small animals and don’t take up much room during the day while sleeping, they love to glide at night. A minimum of approximately 3 ft x 3 ft x 3 ft for 1-2 gliders and 5 cubic feet per additional glide is required. Gliders are very active pets and love climb and glide around their cage so the bigger the better!

*Example*

Two of the best cage options for sugar gliders are the **Double Critter Nation** (pictured) and the **Madagascar Sugar Glider Cage**.

**BEDDING**

**GOOD**

- fleece
- towels
- newspaper
- puppy pads

**BAD**

- cedar
- pine
- litter of any kind
- shredded paper

**FURNISHINGS**

Decking out your suggies’ habitat with not only the essentials but also an assortment of fun stuff to do is incredibly important for the happiness and well-being of your pets. It is ideal to change out the toys and furnishings for them in addition to providing a variety and number of items to keep them from getting bored. Gliders are natural foragers, so make sure that you give them toys that make them work a little bit. For example, some glider owners put treats in cups or plastic Easter eggs so that their gliders have to search for their food. See our homemade toys page on our website for more ideas!

**ESSENTIALS**

- water bowl or bottle
- food dish
- foraging toys
- glider safe wheel
- bonding pouches *(multiple for in and out of cage use)*
- hammocks

**FUN STUFF**

- hanging ropes
- bird toys
- fabric cubes
- fleece vines

- bird branches*
- jingle balls
- barrel of monkeys
- PVC tubes

*Never use pine products.

**WHEELS:** Gliders love to run on wheels! Be sure to buy a wheel that they can’t get their feet stuck on or their tails wrapped around the supporting beam. **Never use wheels with wire tracks or a middle supporting beam that is stationary.**
**DIET**

**HOMEMADE**: There are a few different homemade glider diets you can easily make at home. We feed and recommend the HPW or High Protein Wombaroo Diet. Please see our special guide on making this food for instructions.

**PELLETS/KIBBLE**: Never feed your sugar gliders pelleted sugar glider or rodent food or cat food! These products not only can cause abscesses in your pet's mouth but are not nutritionally correct and can lead to a multitude of illnesses.

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**TYPES OF PRODUCE**

Below are lists of great fruits and veggies to add to your sugar gliders' diet as well as a few things to avoid. Please visit lpcsuggies.blogspot.com for a complete list of foods that are safe and unsafe for sugar gliders.

### GOOD VEGGIES
- alfalfa
- artichoke
- asparagus
- broccoli
- brussels sprouts
- cabbage (green & red)
- carrots
- cauliflower
- celery
- collard greens
- cucumber
- green beans
- lettuce
- kale
- mushrooms
- parsley
- peas
- pumpkin
- radish
- spinach
- squash
- sweet pepper
- tofu
- turnip greens
- watercress
- yams

### GOOD FRUIT
- apple
- apricots
- banana
- blackberries
- blueberries
- cantaloupe
- cranberries
- dates
- grapes
- grapefruit
- honeydew melon
- kiwi fruit
- kumquat
- mango
- nectarine
- papaya
- passion fruit (purple)
- peach
- pear
- pineapple
- plantain
- pomegranate
- prickly pear
- raspberries
- strawberries
- tangerine
- watermelon

### UNSAFE FOODS
- apple seeds
- aspartame
- bird seed
- caffeine
- candy/chocolate
- canned food
- cassava
- catnip
- cheese
- chips/junk food
- chives, leeks, onions, garlic, etc.
- crickets
- decorative bamboo
- dog and cat food
- fried/fatty foods
- fruit pits
- high fructose corn syrup
- raw kidney or lima beans
- peanuts/peanut butter
- Pepper
- raw eggs or meat
- rhubarb
- salt
- insects not raised as pet food

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**Example**

MN Pocket Pet Rescue recommends HPW brand as your homemade diet base. Be sure to buy ONLY OHPW (Original HPW)—not HPW Complete. There have been cases of some HPW diets causing illnesses or even death. Don't buy knock offs!
SUGAR GLIDER CARE GUIDE

Bonding & Social Needs

BONDING

You must work for the trust of your sugar gliders by spending time bonding with them every day. Bonding is the act of making a physical and mental connection with your gliders. It is important to bond with your sugar gliders because it gives them confidence and makes them more comfortable around you and in general. Socializing with your sugar glider prevents fear-based aggression.

BONDING POUCH: Bonding pouches are small bags usually made of fleece that have a mesh window and a zipper to close it. Place your gliders in the bonding pouch and wear it around your neck while you go about your day. This gets them used to your smell, voice and movements and is a great way to spend time with your pets. Do this during the day and they will nap in it if they relax enough!

TENT TIME: Let your gliders run and play inside a tent (screen tents work best, see our website for links) or a small room with you for a few hours every night. Providing food for them during this time helps develop trust surrounding you and their food.

LICKY-TREATS: Put something like natural/organic baby food (in a sweet flavor) or honey on your finger and let your gliders lick it off. This will make them less fearful of your hands.

GLIDER PROOFING: When having outside playtime be sure to secure the area so your gliders can't escape the designated area. Always hide or cover all cords, wires and outlets, put away anything that you do not want chewed on including house plants. Make sure your pets cannot get into small spaces that you cannot reach into such as under the fridge or in couch cushions. Use a draft guard or something similar to block escape routes under doors. Always keep the toilet lids closed so your gliders don't fall in! If you have other pets, secure them in another room or a crate.

Your glider should have at least 1 - 2 hours active time outside their cage per night. Sugar gliders are nocturnal and are most active at night.

SOCIAL NEEDS

BONDED BUDDIES: Sugar gliders are very social and will be happiest when living with other gliders. In fact, they live in colonies of around 10 - 15 gliders in the wild! It is strongly recommended to keep a minimum of two sugar gliders at a time. Some sugar gliders will become very ill or pass away from loneliness if kept alone. Never keep unaltered opposite sex pairs together.

It is recommended to have male sugar gliders neutered as it reduces the risk of certain illnesses, reduces aggression and creates the ability to house with female gliders without the risk of pregnancy. Spaying female sugar gliders is not recommended as it is a very invasive and risky procedure.
GENERAL INF0

ANNUAL EXAM: It is important to take your sugar glider to the vet for an annual exam, to ensure your pet is in good health. Sugar gliders do not require vaccines.

GENERAL SIGNS OF ILLNESS:
any behavioral change
lethargy
defensive aggression
disinterested in treats
changes in eating or drinking
decrease/lack of urination/defecation
poor coat quality
prolonged shaking/shivering
head tilt
vomiting

LIFESPAN: 12 - 15 years

REPRODUCTION: Unlike all other pocket pets, sugar gliders are marsupials. This means they carry their young in a pouch. Gliders become sexually mature and are able to reproduce at 16 weeks out of pouch. Baby sugar gliders are generally weaned at 16 - 17 weeks out of pouch.

COMMON ISSUES

HIND LEG PARALYSIS: Sugar gliders who do not have a balanced diet with appropriate levels of calcium will develop hind leg paralysis due to calcium deficiency. Symptoms include shaking, lethargy, lack of coordination, swollen toes, broken bones with no apparent cause, limping and of course loss of use of hind legs. This is a deadly disease and your pet needs to be seen by a vet immediately if any signs are presented.

SELF MUTILATION: Sugar gliders are extremely sensitive creatures and sometimes if injured, stressed or depressed, will chew on parts of their body, particularly the tail and abdominal areas. Some gliders who are depressed after losing a cage mate or who are kept alone will self mutilate due to depression. Gliders make a particular noise when self mutilation that sounds like a combination of a cry and a "crab." If you notice your glider making this sound or see him chewing on himself or discover hair loss or sores, take your glider to the vet.

ABSCESS: The main symptom of a facial/oral abscess is facial swelling. Other symptoms include disinterest in eating, difficulty eating and lethargy. Your vet will need to diagnose whether or not your glider has an abscess. Sometimes, abscesses cannot be treated with antibiotics alone and will need to be drained by your veterinarian.

If your sugar glider displays any change in behavior or signs of illness, take it to a vet immediately.
SAFE HANDLING

PICKING UP YOUR SUGAR GLIDER: Most sugar gliders will crawl right into your hand, especially if they know you. If your glider is not yet bonded to you, you may want to encourage him to crawl right into your bonding pouch. If he does not go in it on his own, gently scoop your glider from underneath and place him in the bonding pouch. When holding a sugar glider in your hands, unless you are in a glider proof room, cup your hands gently around him so he cannot leap from you. If the room is glider proof you can let your pet run up and down your arms and along your body and allow him to glide to safe surfaces.

TRUST: It is ideal to let your gliders come to you before reaching in to pick them up as this develops trust. Talk to your sugar glider and let it sniff your hand before you pick it up to announce that you are coming.

GROOMING

NAIL TRIMS: Sugar glider's nail grow fast and will need to be trimmed regularly. Be sure to only clip the clear part of the nail, avoiding the pink vein (quick.) Use human nail clippers and try to cover up the toe with your fingers so that only the nail is exposed. If you accidentally cut the quick, dip your pet's foot in cornflour or styptic powder. They have 5 fingers on their hands and 5 toes, although only 2 will need to be trimmed. The big toe is clawless and the 2nd and 3rd claws are partially fused together for use in grooming and does not need to be trimmed.

Nail trims can be scary for a sugar glider so be sure to give breaks and lots of treats!

BATHING: Do not bathe your sugar glider. Gliders are very clean animals and keep themselves well groomed. If you notice that your glider is not keeping himself clean, the fur is looking disheveled or has bald spots from overgrooming your pet may be ill or distressed and should be seen by a vet.

BRUSHING: You do not need to brush your sugar glider. Some gliders appreciate being gently brushed with a toothbrush though!

DENTAL CARE: Unlike rodents and rabbits, sugar glider's teeth do not grow continuously throughout their lives and do not need to be worn down or trimmed. You do not need to brush your sugar glider's teeth. If they are having trouble eating or drinking, they should be seen by a vet.

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Handling & Grooming

Sugar gliders can be very affectionate pets. It is important to bond with your gliders and spend lots of time with them!
**Behavior**

**VOCALIZATION**

**CRABBING**: This sound can be quite startling to those who've never heard it before. It sounds a bit like a loud locust. If your glider crabs at you, do not back away or move forward, just freeze. If you continue to approach the glider, it can damage the trust that you are trying to build with them.

**BARKING**: This sounds like a small dog yipping. It is not 100% known why they do it, but most speculate it's a way to call over members of their colony (that includes you) or to warn of a threat.

**PURRING**: Gliders will purr softly just like a cat to show they are content and happy.

**HISSING**: Hissing, like crabbing, is a sign of unhappiness. There are **three** main types of hisses. **Short deliberate hisses, sometimes sounds like a grunt**: usually done while trying to poop. They will arch their backs and stick their tails up. If they are hissing while trying to poop, they may be constipated. Try giving them some honey water or Gatorade/electrolytes to increase drinking. **Slightly longer, change of pitch hisses**: a sound of annoyance. **Long, drawn out hissing**: "Come here RIGHT NOW!"

**CHIRPING**: This is a little clicking noise they usually make while eating their favorite food. It's kind of like a way of them saying, "My compliments to the chef!"

**CHATTERING**: This is just another way to talk to each other.

Visit [http://lpcsuggies.blogspot.com/p/sounds.html](http://lpcsuggies.blogspot.com/p/sounds.html) for links to hear sugar glider sounds!

**BODY LANGUAGE**

**SCENT MARKING**: Male sugar gliders will rub their heads on objects to mark them.

**SNEEZING**: Gliders sneeze into their paws and use the saliva to aid in grooming.

**BITING**: If a glider is upset or feels he is in danger, he will bite as a warning and a defense mechanism. Sugar gliders do not respond well to discipline or physical correction. It is best to redirect their attention to promote good behavior.

**STANDING ON HIND LEGS**: When a glider is feeling afraid or defensive they may stand on their hind legs with their mouth opened and tilted up to look bigger and show off their teeth.

**DEPRESSION**: A glider that is lethargic with flat ears and a miserable expression may be lonely or bored. This can lead to anorexia or self mutilation and is extremely dangerous.

**HOPPING**: Sugar gliders may hop from side to side or leap around when they are feeling particularly playful.