



ADOPTED

A WELCOME HOME GUIDE

Welcome

TO THE VBSPCA FAMILY

Congratulations on adopting a new furry friend!

In the following pages you will find helpful information designed to support your new pet's transition into a new home environment. The first few days and weeks are critical, so please read this booklet carefully to be sure you are setting them up for success.

Thank you for adopting and supporting our mission of eliminating animal suffering while increasing human compassion. We're happy to have you as part of our VBSPCA family.

Essential Items

Everything your pet needs to get settled in their new home

- ☐ Food Dish
- ☐ Water Dish or Bottle
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Treats
- ☐ Cage
- ☐ Toys
- ☐ Brush
- ☐ Pet Carrier



Did You Know?

Many of the items on this list are available for purchase at the VBSPCA Pet Retail Store located inside the shelter. All proceeds support the homeless animals of the VBSPCA.

Small Animal **Handling**

All pets need time to adjust to new environments. It is important to be patient with your new pet as they grow more comfortable.



Build Trust with Treats

Hand-feeding treats to your new pet will build trust and create a positive association with your presence.

Go Slow & Be Gentle

Your new pet is much smaller than you are and can be easily startled by quick movements or rough handling.

Picking Up Your Pet

Rabbits: Put one hand under the front half of your rabbit and the other under the back half. Never pick a rabbit up by the ears or scruff - it can cause injury.

Mice: Scoop them up with your hand or gently grasp the base of the tail before putting them into your hand. Picking a mouse up by the middle or end of the tail could hurt them.

Other small animals: Put one hand underneath them and the other over their back. Don't pick them up by their tails!

Signs of Illness

All small animals should be examined by a veterinarian once per year. Additionally, if you notice your pet has one or more of these symptoms, consult your veterinarian.

	Rabbits	Guinea Pigs	Rats	Gerbils	Hamsters	Mice
Diarrhea/Changes in Urine	●	●	●	●	●	
Weight Loss	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lethargy	●	●	●	●	●	●
Changes in Fur		●			●	
Difficulty Breathing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sneezing		●	●	●	●	
Coughing						●
Dull/Crusty Eyes	●	●	●	●	●	●
Runny Nose	●				●	

Basic **Rabbit Care**

Food & Water

Your rabbit should always have access to grass hay and fresh water. Provide fresh, leafy greens like dark lettuces, collard greens, turnip greens, and carrot tops daily (a minimum of 2 cups per every 6 lbs. of your rabbit's weight). You can also use rabbit pellets to round out their diet. Rabbits should only get 1/8 - 1/4 cup of pellets per 5 lbs. of your rabbit's weight. Too many pellets can cause serious illness or be fatal to your pet.

Cage & Environment

The cage length for one rabbit should be at least 3-4 feet. Use a solid-bottom metal cage as wire cages can hurt your rabbit's feet. Clean your rabbit's cage 1-2 times per week. Training your rabbit to use a litter box will help keep their environment clean.

Exercise & Toys

Your rabbit should be allowed to exercise outside of the cage in a safe area for several hours daily. Be sure your rabbit's cage has items for digging and chewing such as cardboard boxes, chew sticks, and shredded paper.



Basic Guinea Pig Care

Food & Water

It is important that guinea pigs eat a hay based diet in order to keep their teeth and GI tract healthy. Guinea pigs can also eat 1/4 - 1/2 cup of pellets daily, but they must be Vitamin C fortified since guinea pigs cannot make their own Vitamin C. Also make sure that water is available at all times. For a treat, offer bite-sized amounts of fruits and vegetables daily (no more than 1/2 a handful of veggies and a slice of fruit per guinea pig).

Cage & Environment

The cage should be a minimum of four square feet per guinea pig. Use a solid-bottom cage with a wire cover. Line the cage with bedding. Be sure to remove soiled bedding, droppings, and stale food daily. Wash the cage with soap and water weekly.

Exercise & Toys

Guinea pigs should be allowed to play in a small room or enclosed space daily. Be sure to supervise your pet. Give your guinea pig things to play with and chew on inside their cage like cardboard tubes, rocks, branches, and twigs.



Basic Rat Care

Food & Water

Your rat should always have access to rat blocks and fresh water. Offer small, bite-sized bits of fresh fruits and vegetables daily such as peas, broccoli, carrots, apples and bananas. Rats also love people food, so you can occasionally give them cooked pasta or a bit of pizza crust.

Cage & Environment

The recommended cage size for a rat is at least 2' x 2' x 2'. Use a solid-bottom, powder-coated wire cage. Line the cage with bedding. Be sure to remove soiled bedding, droppings, and stale food daily. Replace bedding and wash the cage with soap and water weekly.

Exercise & Toys

Your rat should be allowed to exercise outside of the cage in a safe area for one hour daily. Inside the cage, provide items for your rat to climb and run through (like PVC pipe, ladders, and branches) and things for them to chew (dog biscuits, rawhide chews, cardboard).



Basic Gerbil Care

Food & Water

Your gerbil should always have access to gerbil mix and fresh water. Offer small, bite-sized bits of fresh vegetables daily and fresh fruits every other day. Recommended fruits and vegetables include peas, broccoli, carrots, apples, and bananas.

Cage & Environment

Use a wire cage or aquarium with a wire mesh top that is at least 10 gallons. Line the cage with at least two inches of bedding. Be sure to remove soiled bedding, droppings, and stale food daily. Replace bedding and wash the cage with soap and water weekly.

Exercise & Toys

Gerbils love to play! Be sure they have plenty of extra bedding, hay, or shredded paper towels for digging, and PVC pipes or cardboard tubes for tunneling. Gerbils also love to chew, so provide them with unpainted/untreated wood, twigs, and hard dog biscuits - no plastic!



Basic Hamster Care

Food & Water

Your hamster should always have access to rat blocks and fresh water. You can also supplement their diet with hamster mix. Offer small, bite-sized bits of fresh vegetables daily and fresh fruits every 2-3 days. Recommended fruits and vegetables include spinach, lettuce, carrots, and apples.

Cage & Environment

Syrian hamsters need a wire cage or aquarium with a wire mesh top that is at least 10 gallons. Dwarf hamsters can be kept in a cage made for mice. Line the cage with at least two inches of bedding. Be sure to remove soiled bedding, droppings, and stale food daily. Replace bedding and wash the cage with soap and water weekly.

Exercise & Toys

Hamsters need a lot of exercise to be happy. Make sure they have a wheel for running as well as cardboard or store-bought tubes for tunneling. Hamsters need to chew to wear down their teeth, so provide unpainted/untreated wood, twigs, and hard dog biscuits.



Basic **Mouse Care**

Food & Water

Your mouse should always have access to rodent chow and fresh water. Offer small, bite-sized bits of fresh vegetables daily and fresh fruits daily. Recommended fruits and vegetables include peas, bananas, carrots, apples, broccoli, zucchini, and cucumber.

Cage & Environment

Use a wire cage or aquarium with a wire mesh top that is at least 10 gallons. Line the cage with several inches of bedding. Be sure to remove soiled bedding, droppings, and stale food daily. Replace bedding and wash the cage with soap and water weekly.

Exercise & Toys

Mice need a lot of exercise to be happy. Make sure they have a wheel for running as well as cardboard or store-bought tubes for tunneling and ladders for climbing. Mice need to chew to wear down their teeth, so provide things like unpainted/untreated wood, twigs, and hard dog biscuits.





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For additional information to help you care for your pet,
visit our online Pet Care Resources Center at

vbspca.com/pet-care-resources