

*Is Mus musculus right for you? Here's how to care for these fun-loving, friendly critters.*

## Background

Thinking of getting a mouse? You're in good company. The domestic mouse—not to be confused with the species you'd find in a field or attic—has been kept as a pet for centuries.

A mouse measures in at about 3 1/2 inches, not including tail, and weighs just 1/2 to one ounce. While white (albino) mice are the most common type found in pet stores, fancy mice can be up to double the size, and come in a wide variety of coat colors and types, from curly and shiny to silver and cinnamon. If well cared for, mice typically live one – three years.

Mice are curious, charming pets, and will be active at various times throughout the day. However, they are fragile and should be treated gently, and children caring for them should always be supervised by an adult.

## Housing

Mice are very social with members of their own kind, and females will do especially well in a group. Males can be kept together if introduced at a young age—if introduced when adults, they will fight. If you plan to keep several males together, however, be certain that you've provided enough room. Do not house males and females together, since mice breed quickly—and often—with large litters.

You can keep three to four mice in a ten-gallon aquarium with a wire cover. There should be several inches of bedding. Use either aspen or hard wood shavings or reprocessed paper products. Avoid cedar and pine shavings at all costs, as these may cause health problems for your pets.

Don't forget the furniture! Provide small boxes or flower pots to hide in, and cardboard tubes for your mice to chew and run through. You can also add a tree branch for them to climb on. Most mice will enjoy running on an exercise wheel, so be sure to get yours one. Make sure that the wheel has a solid surface without

wire rungs, so their tails cannot get caught while running.

Plastic habitats—the kind designed for hamsters—will also work for mice. However, since mice are smaller than hamsters, you may need to put small branches in the tubes so the mice can climb up and down. Keep in mind, however, that these cages can be more difficult to clean. The ASPCA does not recommend that you keep your mice in a wire cage made for hamsters. These models may have bars spaced too far apart to keep mice inside. If a person can stick their fingers through the bars, a young mouse could probably sneak out as well.

## Diet

Mice will do well on a good commercial rodent chow, either in block or pellet form. You can find this food at pet supply stores and feed stores, just be sure the formula you select contains at least 16 percent protein and 18 percent fiber, but not more than 4 percent fat.

The ASPCA recommends offering small amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables to your mice every day as treats. Peas, broccoli, carrots, apples and bananas are good foods to start with, but you may need to experiment to find your pets' favorites. Please don't overdo it, though—mice have tiny tummies!

Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. A water bottle with a drinking tube that attaches to the side of the cage is the best way to go.

Do not give your mice cabbage, chocolate, corn, candy, junk food, peanuts, uncooked beans or onions.

## General Care

Remove droppings, uneaten food and soiled areas of bedding from your pets' cage every day.

Clean the cage completely once a week by replacing dirty bedding and wiping down the rest of the cage. Note that male

mice will tend to produce more odor than females, so their cages may need to be cleaned more often.

Like that of all rodents, a mouse's sharp front teeth grow continuously. Provide unpainted, untreated pieces of wood, dog biscuits or safe chew toys (you can find them at the pet supply store) for your mice to gnaw on. This is crucial for keeping their teeth in tip-top condition and will prevent dental problems.

Mice are very good jumpers, so you will need to be careful when you take them out of their cages. You can scoop them up in your hand or in a paper cup to safely transport them out of the cage. Never grab mice by the middle or end of the tail, since they can be hurt this way. If you need to catch a mouse quickly, you can grasp him at the base of the tail and lift him up as you cup him in your hand.

Did you know that you can tame your mice to sit in your hand or on your shoulder? Start by feeding your mice treats; once they're comfortable accepting treats from your hand, you can gently pick them up. Talk softly to them, too, and let them get used to your voice. Gradually increase these sessions as your pets get used to being handled.

Once your mice are hand-tamed, you can let them out of the cage for supervised exercise everyday. We recommend a small, secured area where you pets can't get stuck behind furniture or chew on electrical wires.

If you think one of your mice is sick, don't delay—seek medical attention immediately.



The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
National Headquarters • 24 E. 92nd St. • New York, NY 10128-6804 •  
(212) 876-7700 • [www.aspc.org](http://www.aspc.org)

Midwestern Regional Office • 1717 South Philo Road, Suite 36 •  
Urbana, IL 61802 • (217) 337-5030 • [www.aspc.org/apcc](http://www.aspc.org/apcc)

TM and © are protected by The ASPCA. ©2004 The ASPCA