



**P & K Pets
Info Sheet #13**

19 Magill Rd

Stepney

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MOUSE CARE



INFORMATION



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INTRODUCTION

The house mouse is of European Origin, but many of the colours are products of breeding, as with the Chinese mouse, also as the result of many years of in-breeding. Mice are easy to keep, and the smell associated with mice should not be a deterrent as they are quite clean animals.



HOUSING

Mice can be kept in a variety of containers depending on the number you expect to keep. However, at all times it must be remembered that mice are capable of climbing through small holes and are able to gnaw through exposed edges of wood and plastic. They can also jump up to 15cm high.

A glass aquarium is possibly the best for easy observation and cleaning. Other cages and vivariums specifically designed for mice or hamsters are also ideal. You can even get extensive trail systems made by joining pipes together that allow your mice to roam around the room, however they are still sealed in and cannot escape. These are excellent for both owners and the mice. The base of the aquarium or cage will need to be lined with sawdust, newspaper or litter and should be cleaned and replaced on a weekly basis.

Your mice will also need somewhere to nest and hide. A hollow log, PVC pipe or upside down ice cream container (with a door cut out) will make an ideal hideout. Resin houses and ornaments are also available. Finally, you will need some play equipment for your mice. A standard mouse wheel is cheap, and the minimum required. You can buy a range of toys designed for mice at pet shops, however a



used toilet roll provides ample entertainment. They will also chew the toilet roll and use it for bedding in their hideout. Other sources of bedding like cardboard, material or newspaper can be provided, although don't try to place it in their hideout, simply leave it in their cage for them to utilize.



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FEEDING

It is critical that water is always available. A standard sip/drip bottle needs to be used to ensure the water stays clean and fresh, you will also have to fill this less often as it will last much longer than in a bowl.

Most pet shops sell rodent or mouse pellets, and they are ideal. Mixes are also available specifically designed for mice. These usually consist of grains, seeds, pellets, biscuit and dried vegetables. However, most people simply use pellets as the staple diet, and then just add the occasional treat like those listed above. Mouse pellets and mixes don't normally perish, and can be kept for some time. Any changes in diet, even changing to a different mouse mix, should be made gradually as a sudden change in diet can cause your mouse to become ill.

BREEDING

With regular cleaning, the 'mouse smell' can be kept to a minimum. The smell is caused by the males as they are territorial and mark their territories. For this reason, in small cages only one male should be kept. If more males are to be kept, then either a larger cage must be supplied with plenty of cover, or no females be kept in same cage.



Even if no females are present, males will still fight occasionally. New mice from an outside source should not be added to an established box as these will be attacked. If it is necessary to add mice, thoroughly clean everything and add fresh sawdust etc and sprinkle mice with a flea powder. This will remove the group smell and allow new animals an opportunity to enter the group.

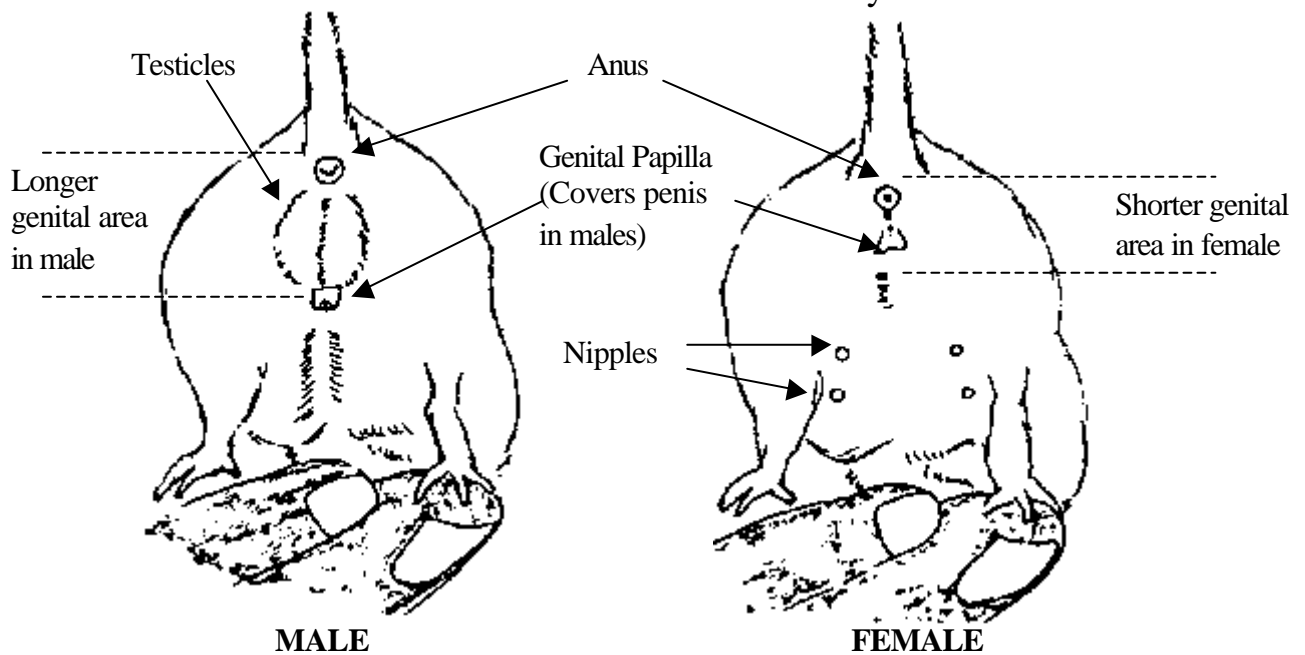
Mice are able to breed from six weeks of age with a gestation period of three weeks. Their colour is visible at approximately three days, their eyes open at approximately ten days, and their ears enlarge at approximately eighteen days. Generally with mice, it would be harder to stop them breeding rather than have problems getting them to breed.



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The easiest way to find out the sex of the mice is to look at the position of the genital organs. The distance between the anus and genital papilla is always shorter in the female. In mature male the testis should also be clearly visible.



GENERAL

The numerous colours are a product of pigmentation and captive breeding. The common colouring is grey hair with a yellow tip, called agouti. There are pure black, brown, white (albino) and mice with white belly and a coloured upper body. Also, there are pied colours, either black and white, brown and white or some with skeletal differences. e.g. short ears or tails. By breeding along selected lines, a great variety of colours are available.