

I'm not a bot



























From hamsters to rabbits and everything in between, Summeridge Animal Clinic loves our pocket pets! While these pint-sized pets are not uncommon to see in people's homes, it is a little crazy how little many of their owners know about their care. Read on to get started on the right paw when it comes to pocket pet care. The term pocket pet encompasses any exotic pet that is a small mammal. They might include hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, guinea pigs, ferrets, chinchillas, degus, rabbits, and sugar gliders. Even though we group them into one category, it is important to note that all of these pets are different species and will have different needs. Perhaps the most important thing that you can do before deciding to welcome a pocket pet into your family is to do some in-depth research on that species needs and care. Hamsters, rabbits, guinea pigs, and rodents all fall under the category of (very cute!) pocket pets - but how do you know if a pocket pet is right for you? And if they are, which one? While it may seem like the ideal option for areas or homes where there isn't space for larger animals, caring for them is not a one size fits all approach, and each has it's own individual needs regarding safety, comfort, and optimal health. Before you decide to take home a pocket pet, here are 9 things you you should consider: What Type of Housing Do Pocket Pets Need? Not only does your pocket pet need suitable living quarters, they also need you to provide them an environment that is safe and has the space and tools they need to go about their normal daily activities. Cage size - the bigger the cage, the better it is. However, rabbits prefer an oversized pen or even free-roaming indoors. Bedding - comfortable and safe bedding like paper-based, aspen shavings, or fleece liners. Use a litter box with hay or paper-based litter if you have a rabbit. Provide exercise wheels, tunnels, chewing toys, and hiding places galore! Rabbits and guinea pigs love chewing fresh hay, so make sure to provide them with plenty of it. What Should You Feed Your Pocket Pet, and How Often? Keeping your pocket pets well nourished will keep them healthy and active - but they also have some interesting nutritional requirements too. Rabbits - The major portion of a rabbit's diet consists of grass hay. However, as an occasional treat, you can feed them green leafy vegetables (parsley, kale) and fruits like carrots, strawberries, and apples. To ensure they get essential nutrients, you can also feed them high-quality rabbit pellets. The recommended daily consumption is based on the body weight of the rabbit, so check the packaging before feeding. Hamsters - Look for high-quality hamster food containing a mix of seeds, grains, and protein. You can also feed them fresh vegetables (carrot, cucumber), fruits (banana, apple), and cooked eggs in small amounts occasionally. Guinea Pigs - Like rabbits, guinea pigs need plenty of hay in addition to vegetables (leafy greens, bell peppers) and small portions of fruits (oranges, strawberries). Vets recommend you also feed them 1/8 cup of pellets daily to keep your guinea pigs healthy. Rodents - High-quality commercial food in the correct amounts along with a small amount of fresh fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, and grains will fulfil the nutritional requirements of a common rodent! How Do You Handle a Pocket Pet? Taming or handling a shy pocket pet needs consistency and patience. Here's a couple of ideas to help you make your pocket pet feel comfortable in its new home. Create a safe environment away from disturbances. To help them feel secure you can provide hiding spots (like tunnels!) in their cage. These will also serve as safe havens for them during stressful times. Always approach them slowly while offering treats or food so they don't get scared, and use positive reinforcement techniques. Avoid sudden movements and get them used to the scent and sight of your hand. If you do need to grab them to prevent accidents or escapes, use both hands with a firm grip. What health issues should you be aware of, and how do you prevent them? Diarrhoea, obesity, respiratory infections, dental problems, and tumours are common in pocket pets. Guinea pigs can also suffer from vitamin C deficiency as they can't produce it on their own. To lessen the chance of your pet suffering from ill-health, try implementing these preventive measures: Maintain a clean environment - this will prevent infections and bacterial growth. Feed them balanced meals - a nutritious diet will prevent dietary related health issues. Monitor your pet - identifying any changes in habits and quickly responding may prevent long term health issues. Visit the vet - regularly take your pet pocket to the vet for health check-ups. How do you provide mental stimulation and exercise? Mental stimulation and exercise are very important for the well-being of your pocket pets. Here's how you can keep them mentally and physically active: Hamsters and rodents love running in exercise balls or on wheels. They come in many sizes, so make sure you chose the correct one for your pocket pet! Tubes or mazes of tunnels can also provide your pocket pets places to run and explore. Provide them plenty of safe chew toys and wooden blocks to keep them entertained and engaged. Use simple tricks or positive reinforcement training to keep them mentally active. This will also strengthen your bond with them. Lastly, Petting them gently will build trust and provide social stimulation. What is the lifespan of your pocket pet? Here's what we think is the most important thing to consider - with some pocket pet's lifespans generally much shorter than their larger pet counterparts. Here are the average lifespans of the most common pocket pets: Hamster - Syrian hamsters' average lifespan is 2 to 3 years. However, dwarf hamsters only live up to 1.5 to 2 years. Rodents - The lifespan of rodents may vary, with mice's lifespan around 1.5 to 2 years, rats' lifespan around 2 to 3 years, and gerbils' lifespan around 2 to 4 years. Rabbits - depending upon the breed, rabbits live up to 8 to 12 years or even longer. Guinea Pigs - the lifespan of Guinea pigs is generally 8 years if proper care is provided. Are there specific grooming needs? Different pocket pets have different grooming requirements. Brushing - If your pocket pet has long fur make sure you regularly brush it to prevent mats and tangles and remove loose hair. Nails - Trim nails regularly to prevent overgrowth, which can cause discomfort and mobility issues. Teeth - Provide chewing items to help wear down growing teeth and prevent dental problems. Diet - A balanced diet contributes to healthy fur and skin. Compared to other pocket pets, rodents have minimal grooming requirements as they groom themselves. Can you keep multiple pocket pets together? Pocket pets may be small but they don't always like to share their space. Generally, guinea pigs and rodents can co-exist without problem, but that's not always the case with other species due to predatory and territorial behaviours. Mice and gerbils can be housed together but females are best as caged males may become aggressive. If you bring new pocket pets home, keep them in separate enclosures to observe their behaviour for a few weeks. When introducing them, use a neutral space (such as a playpen or bathroom) and supervise the interaction closely. Then, gradually introduce them in short supervised sessions in the shared enclosure. How often should they be checked by a vet? Just like larger pets, pocket pets need regular veterinary visits to address health concerns and take on-time preventive measures. We recommend a visit your vet at least once a year for dental examinations, vaccinations, and general health check-ups. If you notice your pet has had a change in eating habits or is less active, don't wait for your checkup and instead seek the advice of your vet immediately. Because many pocket pets age so quickly, they could be considered senior very early in your relationship with them. Giving them the correct care and attention will keep your pocket pet healthy and happy, enriching your life with all the joy pet ownership is known to provide. If you are unsure what pocket pet is right for you and what you need to do to ensure it lives a happy healthy life, you can always have a chat with your vet care professional! People often buy pets that look cute and like to be able to cuddle with their pets. Gerbils certainly look cuddly but are they cuddly pets?Ferret food isn't always available in pet stores or online in your region. Can ferrets eat dog food instead of specialized ferret diets?Pet rats need an enclosure and you need to consider several things such as cage size, type and material. Which cages are suitable for rats?Cleaning the gerbil cage can look like a difficult task but with our practical guide you'll become a cleaning master in no time.Avocados are edible by humans but the toxin persin can cause serious harm to certain pets. Can gerbils eat avocados or is it toxic to them?Gerbils need a balanced diet and fruit only plays a small part in it. Moreover, not all fruit can be given. What about pears? Can gerbils eat pears? "Pocket pets" are those small pets that aren't cats or dogs.They include pint-sized animals such as rabbits, mice, rats, ferrets and guinea pigs.These unusual pets require special care that is highly specific to their species and not at all like cats and dogs.If you are you thinking of introducing a pocket pet to your family or you already own one of these little critters then this tutorial will help you to understand what care they need.In this special episode of Ask The Vet with Dr Leigh, we are joined by a special guest Dr Bree Talbot from the Bryon Bay Wildlife Hospital who is an expert in pocket pet health.If you have a question about your rabbit, ferret, or rat ask them below and that's how you get uneven wear of their teeth, so they're clomping up and down and that's how you get uneven wear of their teeth. It's important to only feed a small amount of pellet, unless there's a medical reason that your vet will tell you to increase it. There's some people that actually dec't give any kiwi fruit if they like that, a little bit of banana, but again these are all treats. They're all quite sugary so you only want to give a small amount at any one time. What Pellets Can I Feed My Guinea Pig? Dr Leigh: So rabbits and guinea pigs are similar. What about feeding pellets to them? I know a lot of people go to the pet shop and buy a big bag of pellets. Dr Bree: I have to talk to clients regularly about feeding pellets to rabbits and guinea pigs and even I grew up thinking that pellets were fine. But the more that we've learnt about rabbit and guinea pig nutrition and their digestive systems the more that we have realised that pellets are not the best food for them. Pellets are great as a supplement and in small amounts but not as the main part of their diet. Definitely not those pellet mixes that you see in supermarkets. If you look at the pellet mixes or more commonly known as stud mixes, you'll see that they have quite a bit of corn in them, they'll have some sunflower seeds and quite often the pellet will have molasses mixed through. That's because both guinea pigs and rabbits both have a sweet tooth. They love these sweet and oily foods but they're not good for them whatsoever so we want to try and stay away from that. If you do want to feed a pellet mix you want to stick to the brands that actually have a nutritional analysis on the back and you only want to feed a small amount as a supplement to the main part of the diet which will be hay and vegetables. Dr Leigh: So when you say feed the pellet as a supplement are you talking 10% of the diet or is it even more important to have a special cage for them? Dr Bree: It's very important that you have a ferret proof house and a ferret proof cage. We recommend that when you do have them out, which we do encourage so they have a chance to play and they do need that mental stimulation. When they are out, you're watching them because ferrets like to get up and underneath the couch, they're really good at getting up inside the chair, so when people go and then open up the recliners the ferret is actually there in amongst all the mechanics of the springs. You're going to have to make sure that you know where they are all times it's important that you're watching them so they don't come to any harm. The ferret cage needs to be big enough to have a designated sleeping area and a designated toilet area and an area that can eat that is not close to their toileting area. The cage needs to be secure so that they can't escape. What Food Do Ferrets Eat? Dr Leigh: What's a special food do ferrets need? What are the do's and don'ts of feeding ferrets? Dr Bree: Ferrets are what we call obligate carnivores and so their body is made to eat meat and meat byproducts. They can only handle some small amounts of carbohydrates and fibre and so we want to find the diet that is high in animal fats, animal protein and very low in carbohydrates and fiber. Your organ meats, muscle as well as a good quality pellet food as a supplement are the best foods for ferrets. There are some people that will feed just a pure raw diet or a whole-prey diet to ferrets and then there's some people that will feed that, but in addition to a good quality ferret kibble or a good quality kitten kibble. It just depends on what your beliefs are, it divides a lot of people when we talk about a ferret diet. The main thing no matter what way you wish to feed them, is to make sure that you're trying to cover all bases of giving them the meat protein they need. We don't want to feed them just plant things or vegetables. They're not going to eat those and they're not good for their belly, their bellies just can't handle that food. Some people will feed ferrets prey foods, so some people will actually buy them little mice to eat or even go to the butcher and get a rabbit's leg to feed them and then they'll give them a good quality for the cat food or a good quality ferret food in addition to it. Dr Leigh: can they have cooked meat and do we have any concerns about feeding them raw? Do we have to worm them more often or do we have to handle the raw meat in a special way? Dr Bree: Well it's always good to buy human grades meat and you don't want to purchase the offal from pet shops because we don't know if it has been treated with anything, or what grade it is or if it contains parasites. Because ferrets can get helicobacter and Campylobacter they can suffer from tummy upsets if the quality meat isn't good. Generally if you get a good quality raw organ you need to freeze it to kill off some of the potential parasites that might have infected the meat. What Vaccinations Do Ferrets Need? Dr Leigh: What about vaccinating ferrets is that something that you recommend? Dr Bree: Ferrets need to be vaccinated against distemper virus and that is a fatal disease. Luckily we don't see a lot of distemper in Australia and that's because we do vaccinate. We do recommend that ferret kits get vaccinated. It's kind of like a dog and a cat, they get their initial booster vaccinations and then we do it every year after that. The other thing that you do have to think about with ferrets is giving them heartworm prevention. Ferrets can get heartworm just like dogs. We recommend that you treat them with a monthly preventative such as revolution or advocate for cats. It's very easy to apply, it's just on the back of the neck. Dr Leigh: Okay that's fantastic, right well should we move on to rats and mice? How To Care For Rats and Mice Dr Leigh: Tell us the most important thing you want us to know about rats and mice? Respiratory Disease In Rats Dr Bree: So the most important thing that I want people to know about rats is that unfortunately most of them are going to have respiratory disease. You are going to need to research about respiratory disease in rats and be prepared to look after your rat that has it, because nine times out of ten rats will get respiratory disease. Respiratory disease in rats is something that we can't cure. It's sort of in them and it's been bred into them over the years so it's something that we can't get rid of. You need to learn how to manage your rat with respiratory disease and you can do a lot of at home management before you come to the vet. You'll be doing sort of multimodal management at home with the medicines that the vets will give you too. Cancer In Rats And Mice The other important thing I want you to know about rats and mice is that they are really prone to getting cancer. It is likely that your rat or mouse will get cancer. The good thing about these tumours, at least in rats is that usually it's benign, so if we remove the tumour then you've got a pretty good chance of it not growing back. About 20% of cases of cancer in rats are malignant, and in mice, unfortunately, most of them are malignant. So with an already short lifespan, mice that get cancer have an unfortunately short life. The other thing is that I want people to know is that rats and mice are great, great pets. They've got such cute personalities. Rat are really fun to have around the house, but they have this really bad stigma about being messy, yucky and dirty when they're actually really clean animals. Rats don't smell and they're great to have around but they're not around for long enough with these diseases that they get. Dr Leigh: How long do rats and mice live for? Dr Bree: I know a lot of kind of get two years three years out of a rat so it's not very long, it's usually a bit shorter for mice unfortunately. Although, now that we are learning more and more about them, we're providing better medical treatment and people are looking after them better we are noticing them live a little bit longer, but it's not a lot longer unfortunately. Hopefully we'll get there one day. Dr Leigh: Do you recommend that people weigh their rats and mice? How are we noticing these cancer lumps without getting to them too late? Dr Bree: Unfortunately a lot of times owners will only see them when they are big or they will say they're going to look at it and recheck it in a week or so and then it's doubled in size. These cancers can be quite fast growing but the main thing that I think is important as a pet owner for any of these animals is learning what is normal for your animal. The one thing that I do feel is important is when you get your animal is to give them a really good pat, but when you're patting them really feel them, and feel underneath their jaw or feel underneath their armpits and between their legs along their tail and on their ears and do that on a regular basis. Then you might pick up a lump that's teeny tiny that could be like half a millimeter, but because you've been checking your animal regularly you're going to notice that it's different and now it's bigger or different. You might monitor it for a week but you know exactly where it is. You know how big it was on X day, then when you felt it on another day it was different. This really helps vets when we're trying to figure out what it could be in terms of its course and that you know that this is your animal's normal and now this is what's not normal. Knowing what is normal and what is not normal is so important. It applies to rabbits too, when you have a rabbit and you notice a lump on the jaw the lumps and bumps of what would be normal for them and then when it changes. That would be the same for your rats and mice and you must look at those lumps regularly. How To Recognise Bloat In Rabbits and When To Be Concerned Dr Leigh: One of the things that I see a lot of with rabbits for is when they are suffering from bloat. What are some of the signs that people need to look out for with their rabbit especially rabbits and guinea pigs? When do you know that you absolutely must get to the vet straightaway? Dr Bree: If they do have bloat we've got to make sure that we figure out whether it's actually an obstruction or if it's just a really bad stasis. With an obstruction it means that there's no food, liquid or gas that can pass through their intestines. Something is stuck in their tummy blocking food passage versus a stasis where that is where the tummy slows down to a point where nothing is moving. Nothing is moving because there is something wrong with the peristalsis of the stomach and intestine. So it's really important that we figure that out first. But usually, rabbits and guinea pigs will eat constantly though they might not eat during the night as much because they're sleeping but they'll be eating during the day, grazing during the day. If you ever see that your rabbit or guinea pig hasn't eaten for longer than four hours, that is something that is abnormal. Dr Leigh: Not eating for four hours? Dr Bree: Generally it's four hours I mean there's some bunnies that can go a little bit longer because they've sort of learnt to from an early age, but if your bunny is a normal bunny that you see just grazing on the grass or the hay and all of a sudden you're like "I haven't seen him eating for a couple of hours" then that is definitely not normal. Then if you see them lying on their sides or they're shifting weight or rocking because they don't look comfortable that is something that is abnormal as well. If their belly looks big then you need to be getting to your vet straightaway. You're getting in your car driving and calling them saying that you're bringing a bunny that potentially has an obstruction or has really bad stasis that then could turn into an obstruction if nothing is moving for too long. Why Does My Ferret Look Depressed Dr Leigh: One of the things that I often get called about on Your Vet Online is the ferret that collapses and is really kind of wobbly and walking not very well and a lot of times stare. What do you suggest might be the cause of this behaviour and what can people do if they see this happen with their ferrets? Dr Bree: So the most common thing that ferrets get that aligns with those clinical signs is a disease called an insulinoma and that is a cancer of the pancreas. When a ferret gets an insulinoma, the cells in pancreas stop working properly and it results in a really severe decrease in their blood glucose, to the point where they don't have the energy to really lift their head. Ferrets with an insulinoma look all wobbly because they don't have any energy. If you think that your ferret does have an insulinoma of your vet, but in the meantime you can try and put a little bit of honey on their gums to provide them with sugar and a little bit of an energy hit. It is really important that you get your ferret to the vet straight away so that we can collect some blood to diagnose the problem correctly. The other disease we have to think about, which unfortunately is quite common in ferrets is cancer. It's often lymphoma and that's a totally different ball-game to an insulinoma that we need to discuss with you. But remember an insulinoma is super, super common and causes the decrease in their blood glucose that makes them really, really woozy. We need to get that sugar level back up so that they have enough energy for the brain as the brain can't handle a lack of glucose and we don't want them to go into a coma. If it's bad enough unfortunately sometimes they can pass away before we can treat them. Dr Leigh: yes it's one of the questions that I often get called about on Your Vet Online. It's really important that people with ferrets this and are able to give them honey on their gums and then get them straight into that vet clinic. Dr Bree: And decrease any external stimulus too much, we don't want them over excited but you want to make sure that they stay conscious so that we can try and get the treatment as soon as possible. Dr Leigh: Dr Bree I don't know if we've got any questions which is a bit of a shame but we've had a great chat here and I hope people have found that really interesting. I certainly haven't! I'd like to say thank you very much and why don't you tell us how people can contact you on Instagram or Facebook? Dr Bree: I have a Facebook page and it is called Dr Bree and so I put lots of stories up there and pictures of cases detailing what's been going on in the clinic. I also have an Instagram account that's also called Dr. Bree! I like to keep it nice and easy for everyone so that you can find me ask me questions and I'll try to answer them, although it's hard. Your Vet Online is the perfect platform to ask veterinary medical questions. It's always hard for me when I get people asking me specific medical questions because you always want to see the animal like you do by video or by asking more detailed questions, but I try to answer as many questions as I can. I love seeing what people are up to and their animals as well so I quite often try and make it interactive! Dr Leigh: I love keeping an eye on your Instagram page in particular, you have some great stories to share so everyone make sure you check out Dr. Bree's Instagram and her Facebook page. If you do have questions you can ask your questions below and we will answer them for you. Otherwise for a personal consult head over to [www.yourvetonline.com](http://www.yourvetonline.com). I'm Dr. Leigh and this is Dr. Bree and thank you very much for listening tonight. POCKET PET HUSBANDRY: HOW TO PROPERLY CARE FOR YOUR PET Improper housing and feeding are the leading causes of illness and even death in many pocket pets. Since these cute little creatures have an innate ability to mask signs of sickness until the problem has reached an advanced, sometimes even fatal stage, it is imperative to educate yourself on what specifically your pocket pet needs to lead a happy, healthy life. With each species comes a different set of needs, ranging from: Specialty diets and supplements (oftentimes in pellet form) Consistent housing temperatures Specific bedding Proper shelter Fresh water Different handling instructions Unique bathing requirements Appropriate and safe toys or cage accessories We highly encourage you to contact us today if you have questions on how to properly care for your little loved one. We can provide you with plenty of professional advice and veterinary guidance to help ensure the wellbeing of your pet. Thank you for your Cleveland Hot List votes. We were voted #1 again for the 5th year in a row! We are happy to serve the community and appreciate your support. Hamsters, rabbits, guinea pigs, and rodents all fall under the category of (very cute!) pocket pets - but how do you know if a pocket pet is right for you? And if they are, which one? While it may seem like the ideal option for areas or homes where there isn't space for larger animals, caring for them is not a one size fits all approach, and each has it's own individual needs regarding safety, comfort, and optimal health. Before you decide to take home a pocket pet, here are 9 things you you should consider: What Type of Housing Do Pocket Pets Need? 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However, as an occasional treat, you can feed them green leafy vegetables (parsley, kale) and fruits like carrots, strawberries, and apples. To ensure they get essential nutrients, you can also feed them high-quality rabbit pellets. The recommended daily consumption is based on the body weight of the rabbit, so check the packaging before feeding. Hamsters - Look for high-quality hamster food containing a mixture of seeds, grains, and protein. You can also feed them fresh vegetables (carrot, cucumber), fruits (banana, apple), and cooked eggs in small amounts occasionally. Guinea Pigs - Like rabbits, guinea pigs need plenty of hay in addition to vegetables (leafy greens, bell peppers) and small portions of fruits (oranges, strawberries). Vets recommend you also feed them 1/8 cup of pellets daily to keep your guinea pigs healthy. 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Diarrhoea, obesity, respiratory infections, dental problems, and tumours are common in pocket pets. Guinea pigs can also suffer from vitamin C deficiency as they can't produce it on their own. To lessen the chance of your pet suffering from ill-health, try implementing these preventive measures: Maintain a clean environment - this will prevent infections and bacterial growth. Feed them balanced meals - a nutritious diet will prevent dietary related health issues. Monitor your pet - identifying any changes in habits and quickly responding may prevent long term health issues. Visit the vet - regularly take your pet pocket to the vet for health check-ups. How do you provide mental stimulation and exercise? Mental stimulation and exercise are very important for the well-being of your pocket pets. Here's how you can keep them mentally and physically active: Hamsters and rodents love running in exercise balls or on wheels. 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This category of pets includes: Hamsters Gerbils Ferrets Rabbits Mice Chinchillas Hedgehogs Sugar Gliders Tips For Caring For Your Pocket Pet While every pocket pet will come with its own specific needs, there are some similarities when it comes to caring for these adorable little pets. Here are a few pocket pet care tips to help get you started: Create a Clean & Safe Home For Your Pocket Pet For your pocket pet to live comfortably and happily it's important to provide them with a secure enclosure with plenty of space to move and play. Naturally, the amount of space your pet needs will depend on their size. A mouse for example will need far less space than a rabbit, but your mouse's enclosure will need to be extra secure to ensure that your pocket pet doesn't escape. On the other hand, a chinchilla will need a taller cage so that they have room to stand on their hind legs and look around, and a rat will need a cage large enough to include plenty of exercise equipment to keep them occupied. Be sure to choose a cage that has a solid base that can be cleaned and disinfected easily. Choosing the best spot to place your pocket pet's home can be challenging. Ensure that you keep your pet's enclosure well away from other pets that could view your small animal as prey, (such as cats and dogs), and do not place the cage in direct sunlight. You should also keep in mind that many pocket pets are nocturnal which means that while you are trying to sleep your pet could be scurrying around making lots of noise. Use Good Quality Bedding Your pocket pet will need to be supplied with clean, soft bedding so that it can create a cozy nest sleep in. There are countless types of bedding available, and the best bedding for your pocket pet will depend upon the species. Your pet's bedding must be nontoxic, free from dust, and absorbent. Aspen shavings, Timothy hay and paper litter are some of the most popular forms of bedding for pocket pets. To discover which bedding is best for your pet be sure to ask the breeder or your pocket pet vet for recommendations. Remember that your pet's bedding will need to be kept clean in order to keep your pet healthy. Once a week it's important to remove old bedding, clean and disinfect your pet's cage, then provide your small pet with fresh clean bedding. Don't forget to clean any toys or structures in your pet's cage too. Keep Your Pocket Pet's Mind & Body Active Pocket pets, like cats and dogs, need plenty of attention and social time in order to stay contented. Set aside a few minutes every day to spend time with your pocket pet. The more time you spend with your pet, the more relaxed they will be when handled. Whenever your pocket pet is out of their cage, be sure that the space is secure so that they can't escape and won't get into trouble, and never put your pocket pet on a tall surface that they could fall off of. Many pocket pets also appreciate toys and activities. Equipue your pet's cage with species appropriate hiding places, climbing frames, tunnels and exercise equipment such as hamster wheels and balls. Make sure these items are made from durable materials that can't be chewed and that your pet cannot become trapped inside. Care For Your Pocket Pet's Teeth Many pocket pets have teeth that continue to grow throughout their entire lifetime. That means pet parents need to be extra aware of their pocket pet's dental health. Provide your small pet with specially formulated chewing materials in order to help keep their teeth at a comfortable and healthy length. While all are not appropriate for every pet, some popular options include: Hard shelled nuts such as macadamia or pecan Wood chews Rats often enjoy dog biscuits Apple, willow, aspen branches Compressed alfalfa cubes Ask your small companion animal vet for advice on which chewing materials are best for your pocket pet. Feed Your Pet a Nutritious Diet Every species has its own nutritional requirements that must be met in order for your pet to stay healthy. Providing your pocket pet with food specifically formulated for their species is the best way to ensure that your pet maintains an optimal weight, while minimizing allergic reactions, and reducing the chances of malnutrition. Many pocket pet species require particular ratios of fresh vegetables, seeds and pellets in order to meet their nutritional needs. Ask your vet for advice on how best to feed your pocket pet. Provide Your Pocket Pet With Routine Veterinary Care Just like cats and dogs, pocket pets benefit from regular checkups. Veterinary checkups for pocket pets provide your vet with an opportunity to answer any questions you may have regarding your pet's care, behavior or health, but also give your vet an opportunity to spot the earliest signs of developing health issues. Treatments are generally most effective when health issues are detected early, which means that regular veterinary care may help to extend the good health and lifespan of your pocket pet. Note: The advice provided in this post is intended for informational purposes and does not constitute medical advice regarding pets. For an accurate diagnosis of your pet's condition, please make an appointment with your vet. At Northgate Veterinary Clinic our Seattle vets care for a range of pocket pets. Contact us today to book an examination for your small companion mammal. SUMMARY Get all the essentials in one place with The Pocket Pet Owner's Manual: Everything You Need to Know. This beginner-friendly guide covers the core principles of small pet care—from choosing the right animal to daily routines, diet, habitat setup, and health maintenance—perfect for new owners or anyone looking to refresh their knowledge. FEATURES Pet Selection Guide: Choose the best small pet for your lifestyle. Habitat Setup: Learn how to create a safe, clean, and enriching space. Feeding Basics: Understand dietary needs by species. Routine Care: Daily, weekly, and monthly care checklists. Health and Hygiene: Spot illness early and maintain cleanliness. Handling Tips: Safely and confidently interact with your small pet. Behavioral Insights: Recognize and respond to your pet's body language. Budget-Friendly Advice: Keep your pet healthy without overspending. DESCRIPTION Whether you're caring for a hamster, rabbit, guinea pig, or mouse, The Pocket Pet Owner's Manual serves as your go-to reference for all things small animal care. It's designed to simplify ownership, eliminate guesswork, and ensure your pet gets the best start possible. The pet selection guide walks you through choosing a pet that matches your space, time, and energy levels—ensuring both you and your animal thrive. Habitat setup helps you build a safe and comfortable environment, including cage layout and enrichment essentials, bedding options, and how to keep it clean. Feeding basics provide a breakdown of what to feed (and what to avoid), including pellet recommendations, fresh food options, and portion tips based on animal type. Routine care lists help you stay on track with grooming, cleaning, feeding, and interaction—keeping your pet's life stable and healthy. Health and hygiene sections teach you how to recognize early warning signs of illness, when to visit the vet, and how to maintain a disease-free enclosure. Handling tips ensure you know how to approach, lift, and bond with your pet safely, while reducing fear or injury. Behavioral insights decode the body language and habits of common small pets so you can respond with understanding and confidence. Budget-friendly advice helps you prioritize the essentials without breaking the bank, giving your pet a high standard of care at a reasonable cost. Perfect for first-time owners or anyone wanting a quick, reliable reference, The Pocket Pet Owner's Manual is your simple path to responsible and joyful pet parenting. — Previous Post Next Post — Mar 25, 2025 Sumedha Anuppi If you have kiddos with anxiety about going back to school, they might like to take one of these Worry Pets with them in their pocket. The poly-pellets inside give nervous fingers something to fiddle with and the super soft cuddle is soothing. Once you make one, you won't be able to stop. Your whole family will want one. It just takes a few supplies and 10 minutes to make one. .Scraps of Cuddle Fabrics (approx. 5 x 10 inches). Poly-Fill® Poly Pellets®. 1 Set 15mm Plastic Animal Safety Eyes for Each Pet, needle, thread, and sewing machine. I've used Jaguar Cuddle in Tan/Brown, Cuddle 3 in Kiwi, Luxe Cuddle Ziggy in Snow, Cuddle Pleece in Fuchsia, and Golden Wolf Faux Fur. You can find all of my instructions to make your own Worry Pet on the Fairfield website here. I think this guy is my favorite...I can't decide whether to call him Hagrid or Chewbacca. If you have kiddos who struggle with anxiety, ADHD, or other problems, you might be interested in these DIY Weighted Vests. Connect with me...