

Sugar Glider care

Sugar gliders are marsupials (warm-blooded animals with a pouch like the kangaroo and wallaby). Gliders originate from New Guinea and Southern Australia where they spend most of their time living in the trees. They possess a gliding membrane that stretches from their wrists to their ankles and allows them to “glide” from tree to tree. Sugar gliders are nocturnal animals, which means they spend much of their active time at night and sleep during the day. They are omnivores i.e. they eat both plant and animal matter. (see diet recommendations) Male gliders have two scent glands used for marking territory. One gland is located on their belly and the other on the top of their head. They will mark objects by rubbing their bellies back and forth upon the object. They will also mark any females in their colony by rubbing the female's chin with their head. Once neutered, these scent glands diminish. Female gliders have a pouch located mid-abdomen. Most sugar gliders will begin breeding somewhere between seven months to a year of age. Like kangaroos, gliders have a very short gestation period of 16 days after which they give birth to one to three hairless offspring that are smaller than a bee. The babies crawl up the fur of the abdomen, enter the mother's pouch and attach to a nipple where they remain for approximately two to three months. Approximately ten days after emerging from the pouch, the babies open their eyes and a month later they are ready to wean.

Housing: A wire cage is preferred and should be 20" X 20" X 20" or larger to provide plenty of space to climb. The wire used is 1" X 0.5" welded wire. Gliders enjoy chewing on wood. It is important to provide natural wood branches in the cage for chewing and climbing. Oak, fruitwoods (cherry, apple pear etc.), willow, and aspen are acceptable. Do not use any branch that has been sprayed with

pesticides. You should bake branches at 200 degrees for ½ hour if you bring them in from outside. A nest box should be provided to give the glider(s) a dark place to hide and sleep. The box should be closed on all sides with a hole for entry/exit. Exposure to bright sun can damage their sensitive eyes. Plain white unscented toilet paper or paper towels, hay or aspen chips can be used as bedding. Avoid using cedar or pine shavings or shavings impregnated with chlorophyll. These bedding materials can cause irritation to the eyes, nose, throat, lungs and skin.

Diets for Sugar Gliders (Peters breviceps)*

Below are the most up to date diet recommendations, but are frequently changed as new information is obtained. There is no simple over the counter diet for sugar gliders. The diets are multi-faceted and time consuming

BML diet (Bourbon's Modified Leadbeaters diet) (cc's treasures uses and recommends this diet)

v ½ cup honey (do not use honeycomb, raw or unfiltered)

v 4oz Premixed Gerber juice with yogurt (mixed fruit or banana)

v ¼ cup wheat germ

v 1 tsp Rep Cal Herptvite (blue label)

v 2 tsp Rep Cal non phosphorus w/ Vit D3 (pink label)

v 2 2 ½oz jars Stage 2 chicken baby food

v 1 hardboiled or scrambled egg

v ¼ cup Apple Juice

v ½ cup dry baby cereal (rice, mixed or oatmeal- many like rice w/ banana flavor)

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1. Mix honey and juice/yogurt mix and blend well
2. Add wheat germ, vitamins, chicken baby food, egg, blend well
3. Slowly add Apple juice and baby cereal
4. Blend well for 5 minutes
5. Pour into Tupperware bowl or ice cube trays and freeze to ice cream consistency

6. This mix will feed 1 glider for a month

Feed:

1 tbsp BML

1 tbsp fruits

1 tbsp veggies

Insects (4-6 crickets OR 4-5 mealworms OR 2 super worms OR 6-8 waxworks)

- * Note all insects should be gut loaded and dusted with Rep Cal
- Wax worms are fattening and should not be a regular part of the diet
- Rotate insects
- DO NOT feed lightening bugs

*Be careful with fruit and veggie choices, goal should be a 2:1 Ca:Ph ratio

Do not feed pits, seeds, +/- skins (pesticides)

Avoid grapes and raisins since enough is not known about the effect on the kidneys of sugar gliders

Rotate fruits and veggies; do not be surprised if their tastes change frequently. There are other diets out there that people use, including some that allow for a "pellet" diet. In general they should get 33% protein and 67% fruits and veggies in their diet. Acacia gum allows for a good enrichment tool that can be placed in small drill holes in branches or toys. It can be fed 3-4 times a week. Another good option is a nectar supplement made specifically for gliders. Good examples of fruits and veggies include: papaya, oranges, bananas, strawberries, cantaloupe, mango, kiwi, peaches, honeydew melon, cucumbers, squash, bell peppers, carrots, sweet potatoes, bok choy, jicama, green beans.