

Are Sugar Gliders the Right Pet for You?

Sugar gliders are becoming popular pets, and we often see them marketed as easy “pocket pets” that you can carry around in your pocket all day long. However, a sugar glider is not necessarily the best pet for everyone. They are fun to carry around in a pouch and pet while they are sleeping, but it’s not all cuteness and cuddling. *The discussion below is meant to help you decide if this is the pet for you, but is by no means an all-inclusive list of drawbacks or care requirements!* Because these cute little critters bond very closely with their people, re-homing is especially difficult for them. Do your own research to make sure you are prepared before you bring one into your home.



This is not a complete care guide! Always do your research before getting a new pet

Activity:

Sugar gliders are nocturnal, which means they will only run around and be crazy at night. They will wake up during the day, but they will want to go back to sleep after 20 minutes or so of play. At night, when you are ready to sleep, they are just waking up! Gliders WILL make a lot of noise at night, so keeping them in a bedroom is not a good idea. If you are a light sleeper, you may want to consider getting a different pet.

Cost:

Sugar gliders are expensive animals. It is recommended that you get 2 sugar gliders instead of just one, since glider's need a lot of attention and can die of lack of companionship. Sugar glider's need large (expensive) cages, no smaller than 36x24x24 inches, but bigger is better. They also need their toys changed often for mental enrichment. Even if you get a good deal on the price for your sugar glider, and cage, there are many other costs to consider, such as vet bills, extra costs to find animal-friendly housing, special diets, supplies, and toys.

Life Span and Health:

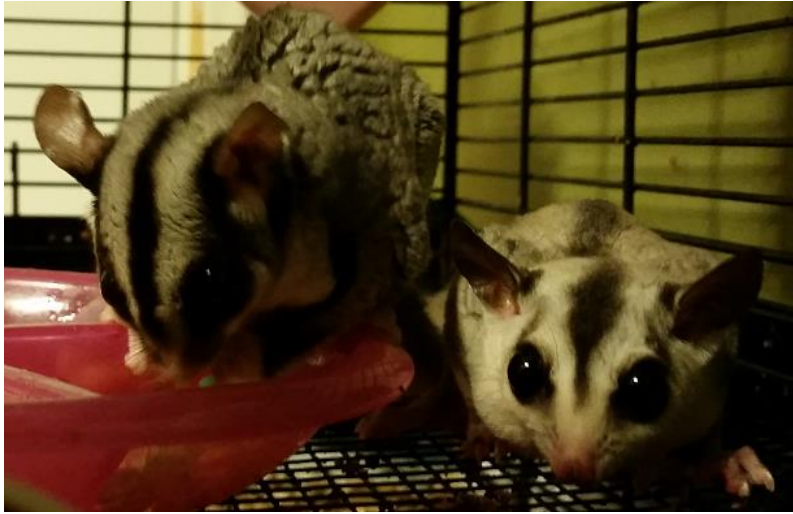
A sugar glider in captivity can live up to 15 years, provided it has good care. That means 5,478 nights of: chopping up fresh fruit and veggies, touching bugs, balancing meals, cleaning cages, and spending quality time with your glider. Being that sugar gliders are very social animals, if you have only one, you must handle it a minimum of 2 hours each night. Not doing so can lead to depression, health problems, and even death. And that means even more responsibility if you have to go on vacation. Do you have someone to spend that amount of time caring for your pet if you are gone for more than 24 hours? Can you take your glider with you on trips?

Vets:

A sugar glider is considered an exotic animal; therefore, not all vets treat them, and their care may be more expensive than the typical dog or cat. It is always a good idea to make sure there is a vet in your area that can care for your glider in case of an accident. Though they tend to be healthy animals, it is always a good idea to have your new animal checked out by an exotic animal vet within the first 3 days of adoption. If the nearest exotic vet is over an hour away, reconsider getting an exotic pet. Small animals die from ailments quicker than a larger animal with the same ailment. A small animal may not live long enough to make it to a vet that far away.

Allergies:

A sugar glider is a furred animal, so if anyone is allergic to animal fur in your household, a sugar glider may not be the best pet for you. Their scratchy nails will be irritating to the skin, which makes allergic reactions worse.



Sharp Nails:

Their nails are naturally sharp to help them grip and climb. These nails can make them get tangled up in their pouches, which can break their toes. Their nails can also leave large scratches on owners' arms. However, clipping the nails of these squirmy little creatures yourself is dangerous; You could accidentally clip too much and cause them to bleed and damage their nail bed. Specially made glider wheels sometimes come with a sandpaper lining, like a nail file that attaches to their wheel, but that only helps so much, and you will still get scratched.

Smell:

There is a smell that comes with the sugar glider, as they do have scent glands. There are things you can do, such as having a male fixed. Also regular and thorough cage cleaning will be needed. A male may mark you with his scent to claim you as his, and unneutered males are especially musky (and aggressive). If you are very sensitive to smells, gliders might not be the right pet for you. Speaking of smell, sugar gliders cannot be potty trained like some pets, and they have little to no bowel control. They go whenever and wherever. In other words, you WILL get pooped/peed on.

Children:

A sugar glider can be a great pet for older children, but is NOT a good pet for younger children. The youngest child that should even HOLD a sugar glider would be between the ages of 8-11, depending on maturity. Even at that age, children are not responsible enough to completely care for a glider, so you, as a parent, will be doing most of the work. If that doesn't sound like fun, then maybe a sugar glider isn't right for you. Children do not understand that jumping around, talking loudly and doing normal child's activities will scare a glider, possibly provoking them to bite. Children also do not understand how to pick a sugar glider up gently. They love to squeeze their pets, and could possibly injure the sugar glider's fragile body. If a child grabs the glider by its tail, the tail will come off in the child's hand! If you do decide to buy a glider for a child, keep in mind that you will ALWAYS have to supervise care, as well as handling. Since they need a lot of attention, you will be doing a lot of supervising.

Ask yourself these questions: Are you ok if a frightened sugar glider bites your child? Will your children have the attention span (or maturity) to care for the pet? Also, since gliders are nocturnal, most of their play time will start after the kids' bed time, so are you willing to do most of the care yourself? Are you willing to care for the gliders when child is grown, no longer able to care for the glider, loses interest, or goes off to college?

Other Animals:

As a general rule, sugar gliders and other pets don't get along. In the wild, a sugar glider's predators are mostly large birds like owls. As a result, they are programmed to fear bird calls and should not be kept near screechy birds (which is most birds). Some dogs and cats can care less about the presence of your new glider, but they are natural predators, and some are just waiting for your back to be turned before they strike. Use your common sense. Gliders should always have their own safe and secure cage/habitat, and not be left to free-roam. Housing them with other animals can be stressful and downright dangerous for your glider.