

# Ideas for Pocket Pets Learning Activities

## Beginning Level

Need more ideas for your pocket pet project? There are hundreds of things you can do! You are being asked to complete **at least five** activities each year. Use this list, the *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*, and your imagination, and then write your ideas in your *Pocket Pets Project and Record Book*. Have fun!

### For all pocket pets

- Describe four characteristics of a rodent.
- Describe the function of a rodent's molar teeth.
- Contact a small animal veterinarian and ask him to talk to your 4-H club.
- Visit your local library and check out some books on pocket pets.
- Visit a pet shop to see what kinds of pocket pets they sell.
- Contact your county Extension professional to find out what the county rules are for your pocket pet project.
- Describe five things you and your family should consider before *selecting* a pocket pet.
- Describe five things you should consider when *buying* a pet.
- Describe how you should introduce a new pocket pet into your home.
- List four precautions you should follow to prevent getting Salmonella from your rodents.
- List three advantages and three disadvantages of interconnecting plastic tubular cages.
- Describe two advantages and two disadvantages to your pet's location in your house.
- Inspect a room in your house for hazards to your pet. List the hazards.
- Give a talk at your 4-H club meeting about selecting a location in your home for your pocket pet.
- Describe two types of suitable pet bedding and two types of unsuitable bedding, and explain why they are good or bad for your pet.
- Explain why hard plastic food bowls are not good to use for your pet's feed.
- Describe what a gravity flow water bottle is and how it works.
- Describe how to clean and disinfect a water bottle.
- Discuss the type of exercise wheel that is best for your pocket pet. Explain the pros and cons of that wheel-type for your pet.



- Draw a “blueprint” or floor plan of your pet’s cage, including where the food, water bottle, and cage accessories are located. Explain why you chose this cage and its accessories.
- List five acceptable treats to give your pet in small quantities.
- Explain what might happen to your pet if given too many sunflower seeds. Look up the nutritive value of sunflower seeds and discuss what is in them that may cause obesity.
- Define circadian rhythm. Explain why it is important to know about this.
- List five signs of an unhealthy pet and discuss how you should proceed if your pet has one or more of these signs.
- Study the drawings on page 21 of your *Pocket Pet Resource Handbook* depicting how to sex rodents. Search the Internet for pictures of pocket pets where you can see their sexes, and list the age and sexes you found.
- Discuss three considerations before breeding a pocket pet.
- Learn how your small animal/pocket pet show is conducted in your county.
- Describe how to prepare your pocket pet for your county fair show/judging.
- Identify six external parts of your pocket pet. Using your pet, show these parts to your project helper.
- Photograph your pet. Be creative. Show your pictures at a club meeting.

### **Gerbils**

- Tell your project helper about the history of the gerbil.
- Describe three characteristics of a gerbil. Show these characteristics to your project helper.
- Review the Mongolian Gerbil Profile on page 28 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*. Learn five profile characteristics and tell your project helper about them.
- Show the two proper methods for handling a gerbil.
- Learn the proper method of sexing a gerbil.
- Tell your project helper the six points included in the show standards by which all show gerbils are judged.

### **Hamsters**

- Tell your project helper about the history of the hamster.
- Describe three characteristics of a hamster. Show these characteristics to your project helper.
- Learn all of the parts of the hamster.

- Review the Syrian Hamster Profile on pages 35-37 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*. Learn five profile characteristics and tell your project helper about them.
- Describe the behavior of a Syrian hamster to your project helper.
- Show the four proper methods for handling a hamster.
- Describe four characteristics of a Syrian hamster.
- Describe four characteristics of a Dwarf Campbell's Russian hamster.
- Describe four characteristics of a Dwarf Winter White Russian hamster.
- Describe four characteristics of a Chinese hamster.
- Describe four characteristics of a Roborovski hamster.
- Learn how to properly sex a hamster.
- Tell your project helper the six points included in judging pet hamsters in Ohio.

### **Mice**

- Tell your project helper about the history of fancy mice.
- Describe three characteristics of fancy mice. Show these characteristics to your project helper.
- Review the Fancy Mouse Profile on page 46 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*. Learn five profile characteristics and tell your project helper about them.
- Show the three proper methods for handling a mouse.
- Learn the proper method of sexing a mouse.
- Name the seven varieties of mice that are recognized by the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association standards.
- Tell your project helper the seven points included in the AFRMA Official Mouse standards of the ideal mouse by which all show mice are judged.

### **Rats**

- Tell your project helper about the history of rats, including *Rattus rattus* and *Rattus norvegicus*.
- Describe three characteristics of rats. Show these characteristics to your project helper.
- Review the Domestic Rat Profile on page 55 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*. Learn five profile characteristics and tell your project helper about them.
- Show the two proper methods for handling a rat.
- Show the two proper methods for restraining a rat.
- Learn the proper method of sexing a rat.

- Describe to someone how to bathe a rat.
- Name the six varieties of rats that are recognized by the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association standards.
- Tell your project helper the eight points included in the AFRMA Official Rat standards of the ideal rat by which all show rats are judged.