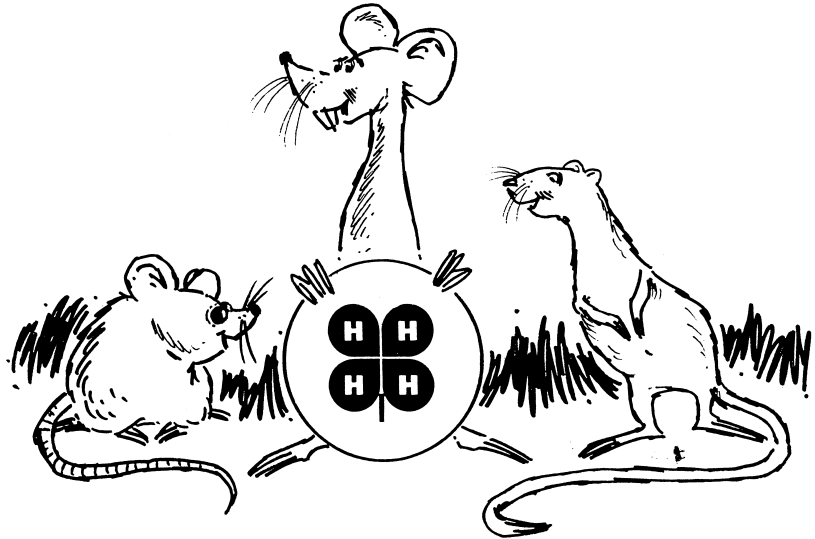




4-H SMALL ANIMALS Pocket Pets



Name of Club Member _____

Mailing Address _____
Route or Street

City, State, Zip _____

Birthday _____
Month Day Year

Name of Club _____

Name of Project _____ Years in Project _____

Signature of Club Leader _____

Date Project Started _____

SMALL ANIMALS POCKET PETS

MESSAGE TO PARENTS

Raising "pocket pets" is a marvelous project for a young boy or girl without facilities for large animals. A "pocket pet" project allows 4-H'ers to experience the joy of owning an animal with a minimum investment.

In this project 4-H'ers will learn the principles of nutrition, care, grooming, and breeding if a litter is raised. All that is needed is a small cage, a place to keep them inside, feed to keep them growing, a willingness to make the project a success and your help as a parent.

This circular was prepared by James Marquand, Assistant State Leader, 4-H.

The Cooperative Extension Service gratefully acknowledges the use of the following publications in the preparation of this circular: "PETS," The University of Minnesota, Agricultural Extension Service; "Active Ideas," Iowa State University, Cooperative Extension Service; and the many 4-H'ers throughout Ohio who helped to evaluate the pilot project.

2/74—3M

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Roy M. Kottman, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, The Ohio State University.

4/00

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When you have completed the project work on the animal you have selected for your pet, turn to page 14 for suggestions on other activities.

REFERENCES

- Visit your local library
- School References
- Pet departments of local stores

POCKET PETS



WORD LIST:

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. Hooded | 3. 4-H Pledge |
| 2. Rodent | 4. Gerbil |

When you're young and sort of lonesome, it's a good feeling to have a pet. Tiny animals, small enough to carry around in your pocket or on your shoulder, make especially good companions.

You can feed a "POCKET PET," talk to it, and feel you have your very own, very special friend. This "pocket pet," prized by so many children, may be a white, hooded, or other variety of pet rat, a mouse, or a gerbil.

Mice, rats, or gerbils can be fun to raise. They are soft, easy to handle, and fascinating to watch. Most rodents, such as mice and rats, prefer to sleep during the day and are active during the night. Gerbils, too, are rodents, but they like to sleep at night and become active during the day. Your pet can be trained to do tricks such as beg for food, slide down a toy sliding board, climb a ladder and many more.

Mice and rat's cages, if not kept clean, will **SMELL. Therefore**, plan on cleaning and disinfecting your cages **several times** a week. By making a pocket pet a 4-H project, you will learn how to feed, water and care for it. You will also have fun and make new friends by belonging to a 4-H club.

You Are A 4-H'er

4-H is open to all boys and girls age 9 (or in the third grade) to age 19, on a nondiscriminatory basis regardless of race, color, creed, or national origin. 4-H club work is the youth arm of the Cooperative Extension

Service. In Colorado, 4-H is organized through the cooperation of the United States Department of Agriculture, Colorado State University and your County Commissioners.

The County Extension Office is located in the county seat town of most counties. Ask your 4-H Advisory the correct address of your Extension Office. Here you will find the County Extension 4-H Agent, anxious to help you in whatever project you choose. He can give you a lot of help.

One of the first things you will want to learn is the 4-H Club Pledge.

"I Pledge:

My HEAD to clearer thinking

My HEART to greater loyalty

My HANDS to larger service

My HEALTH to better living

For My Club, My Community,

My Country, and My World."

Project Requirements

The purpose of a 4-H "Pocket Pet" project is to give you an opportunity to learn and care for an animal. It will be your responsibility to feed, water, and care for your pet. You may wish to obtain at least one female and raise one or more litters during the year.

It is very important that you read and answer the questions in this book. **Only fill in the section** of the book pertaining to your pet – **mouse, rat or gerbil**. Talk with your advisor about what you should exhibit at the fair.

As a 4-H member, you will want to try to attend all of the meetings of your club. Be on time for meetings and other club activities. Take an interest in your club and in any of the county activities, such as 4-H Camp. A good 4-H'er tries: TO MAKE THE BEST BETTER!

QUESTIONS

What is the name of your 4-H Club? _____

Who is your 4-H Advisor? _____

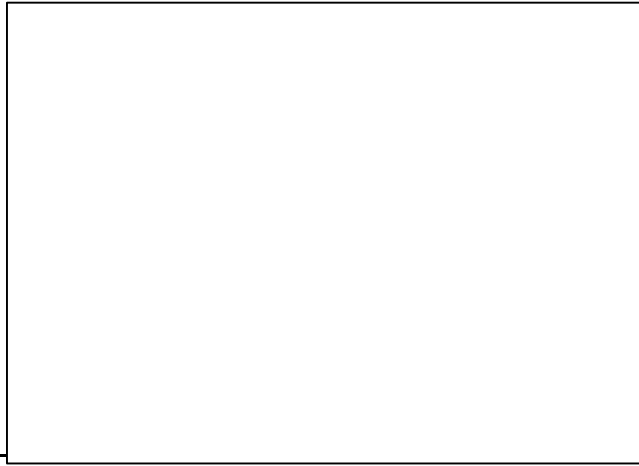
Who is your County Extension 4-H Agent? _____

Have you met your County Extension Agent, 4-H? _____

Where is his/her office located? _____

Do you know the 4-H Pledge? _____ Did you take a picture of your pet? _____

If so, place it here.



Date _____

Describe your pet _____

MICE AND RATS

MICE

I think mice

Are rather nice
Their tails are long,
Their faces small,
They haven't any chins at all.
Their ears are pink,
Their teeth are white,
They run about the house all night,
They nibble things they shouldn't touch
And no one seems to like them much.
But I think mice are nice.

Rose Fyleman

WORD LIST:

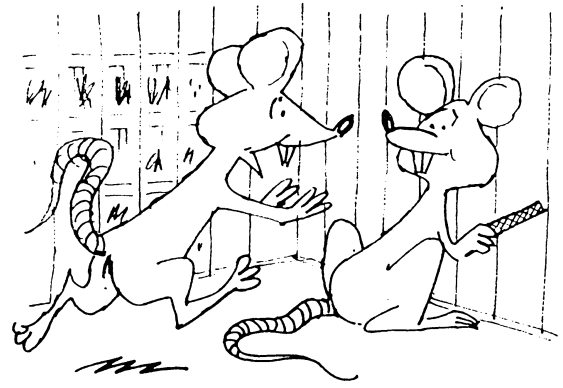
- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Scientific | 3. Domesticated | 6. Precautions |
| 2. Muridae | 4. Disinfect | 7. Gestation |
| | 5. Sanitary | |

The history of the mouse can be traced back to 4000 B.C. They have appeared in worship services of some religious groups in Asia, North Africa, and Germany. Chinese priests have used them in their ceremonies. Japanese folk tales include mice, even though they are not native to that country and many poems and stories have been written about them in this country.

Mice and rats are rodents. Their scientific family name is Muridae. They are hardy, very fertile, and easy to raise. They increase in population wherever man lives.

Wild mice and rats are pests. They destroy stored food, and carry diseases that are harmful or even dangerous to other animals and to man.

Domesticated, or "tame" mice and rats, have been extremely valuable to man in all kinds of psychological, biological, medical, and nutritional studies. It is estimated that over 20 million mice and 10 million rats were used for research purposes in 1970. The cancer program alone requires millions of mice each year.



"Let's wait Joe...they're starting Pizza studies tomorrow!"

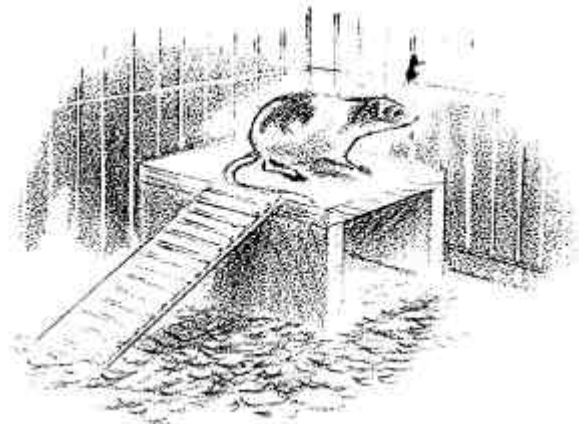
Rats are used for nutrition experiments, particularly vitamin research.

Because these tame rodents are friendly and curious, they make excellent pets at home or in pet clubs.

It is sad that even among adults, the bad reputation of wild mice and rats has spread to their tame relatives. From their elders, many youngsters have picked up fear and dislike of domestic mice and rats. However, those who have observed, fed, cared for and handled these tame, intelligent, and affectionate little animals have come to love them.

Housing

Mice or rats should be kept in a good-sized wire or metal cage. They will gnaw through a wooden cage. If the cage has a



provide a solid upper platform for a place for your pet to rest. Connect both platforms with a

ramp or ladder. Furnish the cage with branches, swings, perches, and an exercise wheel. If the cage has a solid metal floor, line it with sawdust, shredded newspapers, or commercial cat litter. Clean out and disinfect the bottom of the cage every other day and scatter fresh litter on it. For an efficient deodorant, mix 1 teaspoonful of eucalyptus (ask your druggist) in a cup of water. Sprinkle a few drops of the solution daily on the cage floor to prevent any mousy odor.

For a nest box use an empty cottage cheese carton for mice and an empty cereal box for rats. Absorbent cotton or shredded paper should be furnished for nesting material.

Describe your cage: _____

Feeding

Because mice and rats have similar nutritive needs, they will eat about the same foods. Dry dog food and water will keep them in good health. Seeds, nuts, rabbit pellets, hardboiled eggs, bread, breakfast cereals, rice, leafy foods, and raw potatoes are used by some pet owners, but these foods aren't required.

Because mice and rats are gnawing animals, provide a piece of wood to help keep their teeth in good condition. Supply fresh water in a gravity flow bottle.

What do you feed your pet? _____

What is his favorite food? _____

Handling

White mice and rats are usually very tame pets. The younger the animal the easier it is to

tame. Therefore, try to buy one that is about 1 month old or just weaned. One of the fastest ways to tame it is to feed it from your hand or fingers. The simplest and safest way to pick one up is by the tail. (This does not hurt it.) Do not pick it up by the tip of the tail, as the skin may pull off in your fingers. Place the animal carefully in the other hand, and then stroke its head and back gently. Never hold the animal too tightly. If you do, it will struggle to get away or even bite. All animals fear physical restraint. Once accustomed to you, a mouse or rat will come to the front of the cage, climb on your hand, or even explore your pocket.

Tricks

As you handle your pet, sometimes put a piece of his favorite food in your hand or pocket so he will have a special treat as he forms the habit of coming to you.

Your pet needs to be rewarded whenever it does something that you especially like.

To get your pet to sit up—hold the special treat higher than his head. You may have to support him at first with one hand. Mice will usually learn what is expected of them if the trick is repeated daily. However, teaching them tricks takes **time** and patience.

In time, using patience and always a special treat, you can train your pet to do simple trapeze acts, climb from your hand to your shirt pocket, walk on his hind feet, climb ladders, go down slides, and many other tricks. Visit your library and Pet Shops for additional information on training mice and rat.

What tricks did you teach your pet this year? _____

What problems did you have with your pet?

To keep pet mice and rats in good health, follow these rules:

1. Keep pets clean and dry.
2. Isolate immediately any pet that looks or acts sick.
3. If a mouse or rat has lice or fleas, dust it with an insecticide powder that is recommended for cats, and disinfect the cage. Never use insecticide powder that is recommended for dogs.
4. Keep food dishes fastened to the side of the cage and well above the floor. This prevents the contamination of food by urine or feces. The dish should be small enough so the animal can't sleep in it.

With reasonable precautions, these pets should stay in good health and live out their full life span of about 3 years.

Did you have any disease problems this year? _____

How often do you clean and disinfect your pet pen and equipment? _____

Breeding

A female mouse is ready to breed at 8 to 10 weeks, female rat at 3 months. For either, the gestation period is about 21 days. The average litter is 6-10 babies, born without hair and with their eyes closed. Mice and rats are good mothers. They will even accept and nurse orphans that are about the same age as their own litter.

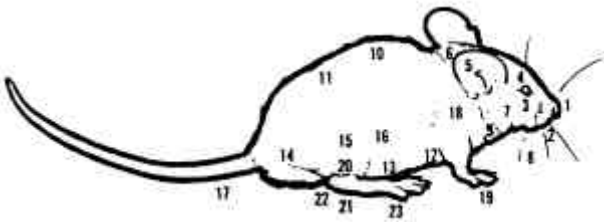
After a pair of mice or rats mate, they may be left together for a time in the same cage. However, remove any spare male until the babies are weaned or are three weeks old.

Young children should be warned that baby mice must be handled carefully since they have a habit of jumping. They may leap

Grooming

If mice or rats are kept under sanitary conditions, they will keep themselves spotlessly clean and well groomed. If you smell a mouse or rat, **don't blame the animal! Blame the person** who is supposed to take care of the cage.

KNOW THE PARTS OF A MOUSE



Head

- | | |
|---------|-------------------|
| 1. Nose | 14. Croup or rump |
| 2. Lips | 15. Hip |
| 3. Eye | 16. |

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| 4. Forehead | 17. Tail |
| 5. Ear | |

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 6. Occiput | Forelegs |
| 7. Cheeks | 18. Shoulder |
| 8. Whiskers | 19. Forepaw |
| 9. Throat | |

Hindlegs

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Trunk | 20. Thigh |
| 10. Back | 21. Tarsal Joint |
| 11. Loins | 22. Heel |
| 12. Chest | 23. Metatarsus |
| 13. Abdomen—hind quarters | |

Health Care

from the hand onto a hard floor and injure themselves. As the babies approach maturity, the sexes must be separated or the animals will multiply very rapidly. You should realize that if you carelessly allow your pet mice or rat to breed, as owners, you have the responsibility of disposing of the babies. You may offer them to your friends or phone the local humane society to see if they will accept them.

Did you raise a litter? _____

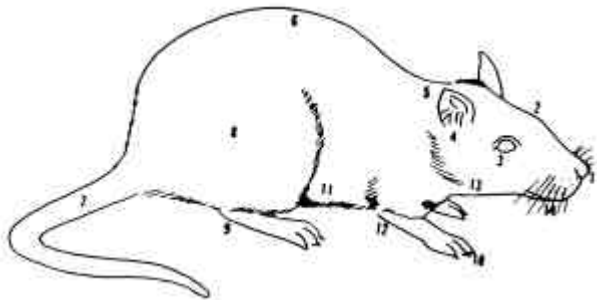
If so, how many were there in the litter? _____

How old were they when you first saw them?

Describe what they looked like. _____

What did you do with your babies? _____

PARTS OF A RAT



- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Nose and Nostrils | 8. Croup or rump |
| 2. Forehead | 9. Hind Leg |
| 3. Eye | 10. Toe |
| 4. Ear | 11. Belly (Ventral) |
| 5. Neck | 12. Fore Leg |
| 6. Back | 13. Throat |
| 7. Tail | 14. Mouth |

Future Studies

Visit your local school or public library and read about your pet. Also, visit the pet

department in the stores and obtain books on raising rats and mice.

In school you may want a project for the Science Fair, or a special project in your science class. If so, you have a real opportunity in a rat or mouse science project. Your science teacher can help you obtain ideas for developing a science project. Your library will also be of help to you.

You may set up different experiments by feeding various diets to your animals and reporting on the results. There are many experiments that you might try. Ask your County Extension Home Economics Agent, for the address of the nearest branch of the national Dairy Council, as they have reference material which will help you set up a nutritional study.

Here is Another Idea—“Mice Breeding,” by Dr. Karl Nestor, Poultry Department, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Wooster, Ohio.

The bodies of all animals are made up of millions of small microscopic building blocks called cells. Each cell contains a center portion called the nucleus. The nucleus contains chromosomes which occur in pairs. In the mouse there are 20 of these pairs.

Genes occur in the body cells in pairs because they are carried on the paired chromosome. Of the pair, one chromosome comes from the father and one comes from the mother. The sex cells, the sperm, and the egg, each contain only one chromosome, and as a result one gene, of each pair. Which gene of the pair each sex cell contains depends upon chance. An individual will transmit only one of each of the pairs of genes in its body cells to its offspring.

Certain genes may mask the effect of other genes. These genes are said to be dominant. The gene being masked is termed recessive.

Mice can be used to illustrate some of the principles of genetics. These can also be used in Science Fair projects to show the separation of genes when they are passed to the young from the parents.

Here is an example of a Science Fair Project. Many kinds of wild mammals, including

mice, have a peculiar distribution of pigment in their hair. The hair is mostly black or dark brown, but each hair has, just below the tip, a yellow band. This color pattern, called the **agouti** pattern, gives mice their “mousy” color. This pattern is also found in tame mice. There are also mice which have all white fur and pink eyes. These are called albino mice. The **agouti** pattern is the result of a dominant gene which is given the capital letter C. The albino mouse is the result of a recessive gene called c. This gene must be obtained from both parents for its effects will not be observed if the **agouti** gene (C) is present. That is, the **agouti**, C, is dominant to the albino gene, c.

Step I—Mate a “mousey” color mouse (C) with an albino (white) mouse (cc). The offspring may be of two types. Type 1—The offspring may be all “mousey” color if the parent contains two dominant genes (CC). Type 2—The offspring may be one-half “mousey” colored parent contains one gene for white (Cc).

Step II—Cross two mousey colored mice from offspring of Step I. Three out of every four offspring will have the “mousey” color and one out of the four will be white with pink eyes.

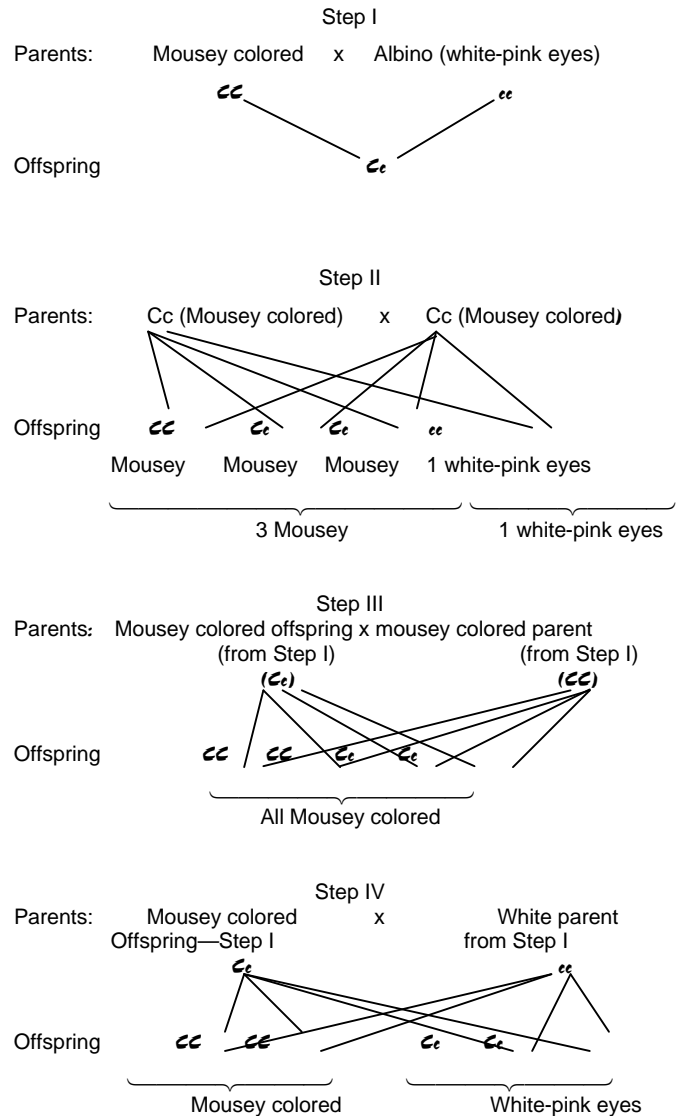
Step III—Cross a “mousey” colored offspring of Step I with its “mousey” colored parent. All offspring will be mousey” colored.

Step IV—Cross a “mousey” colored offspring of Step I with the white parent. One-half of the offspring will be “mousey” colored and one-half will be white.

The above tests will prove that albino (white with pink eyes) mice are a result of a recessive gene.

How can we predict what the offspring will look like? In Step I, we knew that the “mousey” colored parent carried at least one dominant gene (C) and we knew that the white albino parent carried two recessive genes (cc). The

following is what would have happened if the normal parent (“mousey” colored) had two normal genes.



Similar results are obtained from any recessive genes. The following references may be consulted to obtain more information on the subject: The **Principles of Heredity** by Laurence H. Snyder, **General Genetics** by Adrian M. Srb and Ray D. Owen. Also, refer to genetics books at your school and local library.

EXPENSES

| Date of | | | |
|--------------|----------|--------|------|
| Kind of Feed | Purchase | Amount | Cost |
| <hr/> | | | |

Total Feed Cost _____

MY PET

(Write a short story about your pet)

GERBILS

(pronounced jur-bills)

WORD LIST:

- 1. Rodent 3. Shred 5. Monogamous
- 2. Diurnal 4. Eliminates

The Mongolian Gerbil, a member of the rodent family, was introduced to the United States in the early 1950's for medical research. Until recently many people had never heard of these animals. Today they are fast becoming one of the most popular "Pocket Pets" and are used in many laboratories for research. Gerbils came from the deserts and sandy wastes of

Cost of Animal _____

Cost of reference books _____

Other expenses _____

INCOME

Sales of animals during the year _____

Dates _____

Total Income _____

Asia and Africa. Since most of the water that gerbils need comes from the food they eat, at times they can go for months without drinking. Most rodents sleep during the day. Gerbils, however, are diurnal, meaning they sleep at night and are awake during the day.

The Mongolian Gerbil is a rodent whose scientific name is Mereones unguiculatus. Like other rodents, it has incisors (front cutting teeth) which never stop growing. It is also a mammal, which means that the mother feeds her young with milk from her own body and is covered with hair.



An adult is about four inches long with its tail adding another four inches. They weigh about three ounces. The fur on their backs is dark brown, changing to a very light brown on the sides. Their light gray undersides often look almost white. They have soft noses with whiskers of black and white. Their tails are long and furred. When young, they have little clumps of fur on the ends of their tails. Gerbils have short front legs and long hind legs that are strong and well developed. Although their hind leg muscles allow them to take leaps of 24 inches, most of the time they run about on all fours. Each foot has five toes with relatively large black nails. The toes of the forepaws are so skillful that they can pick up small seeds. These small animals often take a sitting position when they eat and hold their food in their front paws very much like a squirrel does.

Housing

An aquarium (3 to 15 gallon size) makes a most interesting home. Sometimes leaking aquariums can be purchased for a modest cost and used as a cage. Metal or heavy wooden cages may also be used. Keep the cage covered with a lid made of metal or hardware cloth. You may prefer to buy a regular small metal animal cage from your local pet shop. If your pet scatters his litter out, set the cage in a large cardboard box with sides about 5" high. If you make your own cage, plan on making it two floors with steps or a ladder leading to the second floor so your pet can run up and down stairs, through holes, and do other stunts for exercise and fun.

Litter of any clean and absorbent material should be used. Cedar chips, sawdust, or commercial small animal litter is best. One inch of litter should be enough, but don't be surprised if your gerbil rearranges the material for his nest. Try placing a piece of burlap sack in the cage for gerbils to chew up and nest in. They will shred almost any kind of paper or cardboard and use it to line their nests. Even though gerbils are fairly odorless, the cage must be cleaned several times a month.

Often your pet will use one corner of his house for a bathroom. Clean this area every couple of days. A small amount of additional litter should be added weekly. It is important to keep the cage dry. Gerbils enjoy temperatures between 65 and 80 degrees F. Try not to expose them to very cold temperatures and be particularly careful of drafts.

Describe your cage _____

Feeding

Gerbils live on grains, seeds, roots, and grasses. Sunflower seeds, corn, oats, wheat,

watermelon seeds, bits of apple, and lettuce are also popular foods. Fresh grass is an enjoyable treat. Your gerbil will eat the same kind of food that is eaten by mice, hamsters, or guinea pigs. Experiment to see what your gerbil likes best. Tastes may vary! Each gerbil will eat about 1 tablespoon of food a day. Gerbils won't overeat but overfeeding is wasteful. Feed only once a day. If extra food is found when cleaning the cage, you are overfeeding.

Water should be provided in a gravity bottle dispenser, since a watering dish is easily upset and it is important to keep the cage dry. Don't be surprised if your gerbil drinks very little.

Handling

Gerbils are shy animals with a strong curiosity. Handling your gerbils often and gently will make them relaxed friends. They enjoy having their back and ears scratched gently. Pick up your gerbil by grasping its tail close to the body. This provides a sure hold on the animal and eliminates accidental falls. You may hold the gerbil gently but firmly with your hand around his entire body. Often a gerbil will jump right into your cupped hands.

Breeding

One of the unique characteristics of the gerbil is that he is monogamous. This means he desires only one mate. If a mate dies, it might even be difficult to replace. Two new mates should be separated by a wire partition until they become accustomed to each other's smell.

The gestation period for gerbils is 24-25 days, and litters average about 5 babies. The babies are born without hair and the eyes stay closed for about 3 weeks. Both parents may stay with the litter. About this age (3 weeks) they begin to take some solid food and by the 6th week the mother will wean them. Privacy is important for the mother and babies during the

first weeks. Do not touch the babies until their eyes are open, as the mother is very protective, and if frightened, especially the first week, may even kill or eat her young. At three months, gerbils are mature and ready to breed.

Did you raise a litter? _____

How old were they when you first saw them? _____

How many were in the litter? _____

Describe the babies: _____

What did you do with the babies? _____

Health Care

Gerbils are quite free of diseases, but care should be taken to provide a dry cage, balanced diet, and protection from extremely cold temperatures. Also, if your gerbil is in direct sunlight, provide him with shade. Harder dry foods are important for proper digestion. Keep a block of wood in the cage on which your gerbil can gnaw. This is very important, as this helps to wear his teeth down. Otherwise, they may grow too long and hinder his chewing. Skin problems are often related to dirty cages or poor nutrition. Your gerbil will spend many hours cleaning and grooming himself.

To keep your pet in good health, follow these rules:

1. Keep pets clean and dry.
2. Isolate immediately any pet that looks or acts sick.
3. If your gerbil has lice or fleas, dust it with an insecticide powder that is recommended for cats, and disinfect the cage. **Never** use insecticide powder that is recommended for dogs.

With reasonable precautions, these little pets should stay healthy and live to be 3 or 4 years old.

Did you have any disease problems this year?
_____ If so, what were they? _____

How often do you clean and disinfect your pet pen and equipment? _____

Dates _____

Total Income _____

MY PET

(Write a short story about your pet)

CAUTION

In the wild, gerbils can cause heavy damage to crops. Because of this, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued the following warning:

Because gerbils might escape, multiply rapidly, and destroy many valuable crops in the desert regions of the West, they should not be taken as pets to Western Texas, Arizona, or New Mexico. California has a law making it illegal to take gerbils in that state as pets.

EXPENSES

| Kind of Feed | Date of Purchase | Amount | Cost |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Total Feed Cost | | | _____ |
| Cost of Animal | _____ | | |
| Cost of reference books | _____ | | |
| Other expenses | _____ | | |

INCOME

Sales of animals during the year _____

GETTING READY F

Since your pet must be kept in a warm place, you need to check with your 4-H advisor as to the date of your County Fair and what you should exhibit. If the show is in September or October, find out where the small animals will be exhibited. Then you can decide whether or not you want to exhibit your pet. Perhaps in place of exhibiting your pet, you may wish to make a poster telling about your project.

If you do exhibit your animal, brush him before the fair and keep the pen extra clean. Never exhibit tiny babies at the fair because of disease problems.

Be prepared to tell the judges about your pet. The judge may ask how old it is, whether it is female or male, whether you raised a litter, and what disease problems you had. He may ask you to show him how you can handle your pet.

Your club may also decide to have a "Show and Tell" night. This is when all the

At some of your 4-H meetings you may wish to help the recreation leader and lead some games. Here are a few:

Animal Upset

Arrange chairs in a circle. There should be enough chairs for all players except for the person who is "it." The group leader goes around the circle and whispers a different animal (dog, skunk, cow, cat, etc.) in the ear of each youngster. They are not to tell anyone else what kind they are. Then tell the whole group all the kinds of animals there are in the group. The person who is "it" stands in the middle of the circle and calls out two or more different animals.

Members show their 4-H projects to Moms, Dads, Aunts, Uncles, Grandparents, and your friends. This can be a lot of fun. Talk it over with your advisors and perhaps you could have your show at a school, parking lot, bank building or community hall. Some of the club members may want to "Show How" to handle their animals or tell something about their projects. Why not plan to have a good time by having some singing and plenty of refreshments?

1. When is your fair? _____
2. Did your club have a "Show and Tell" night?

3. What did you exhibit? _____

Those named try to exchange chairs before "it" grabs a seat.

The person left over is now "it."

What Animal?

Find pictures of many kinds of animals or write the names of animals on slips of paper. Pin a picture or name on the back of each member, but don't let him see it.

Now members go around to others in the group and ask questions which can be answered by only a "yes" or "no" until they guess what kind of animal they are. They might ask: Do I live in a house? Do I live in the jungle? Am I small?

Animal Scramble

Write the scrambled words on a blackboard or large sheet of paper for all members to see or give each youngster a sheet with the words.

Here are some you might try:

letruts (turtles) disbr (birds)
tacs (cats) sodg (dogs)
mestrahs (hamsters) bsigler (gerbils)
bibstra (rabbits)

Animal Rhythm

Group sits cross-legged in circle. Instead of counting off, each member selects an animal in alphabetical order: aardvark, buffalo, crow, dolphin, etc.

The beat is the same as in the regular game of "Rhythm": all slap both knees twice, clap twice, and snap first right fingers, then left. With the first snap, the leader names his animal and with the second snap, another animal in the group. The person with the named animal continues with his animal on the first snap and another with the second.

The rhythm picks up speed until someone forgets what animal he is, names an animal not in the group, or otherwise messes up the rhythm. That someone then drops out and his animal cannot be named again. Continue until the group drops to 4 or so in size.

Dogs and Dog Catchers

Number off into two teams. One team becomes the “Dogs,” and the other “Dog catchers.”

The “Dogs” huddle and decide what breed they will be: poodle, German shepherd, St. Bernard or whatever.

Then the “Dogs” line up about 20 paces from the “catchers.” Slowly they walk toward the “Catchers” as the “Catchers” try to guess what they are.

When the “Catchers” hit the right name, the “dogs” turn and try to escape behind the home line. Any caught become “Catchers.” Next the “Catchers” become “Dogs,” pick a name, and the game continues.

All About Me

Have the youngsters interview each other to find out time, school activities, space in home, others in family, and other factors that would make a difference in whether a person could have a pet and the best type of pet for that member. Interviewees could jot down notes. After 10 minutes of interviewing, the youngsters discuss their findings.

Role Play

The group may want to act out some of these situations:

- What happens when the wrong pet is selected
- What my family will think about the pet I would like
- What I should think about in picking out a pet (Can you think of other topics?)

Debate

Split the group into three smaller sections. One group is “for,” the second is “against” and the third is the audience.

Topic: “Animals should be captured for zoos.”

Give the first and second groups ten minutes to gather their thoughts. Then give each side 5 minutes to “state their case.” Use a timer or alarm clock with buzzer to keep track of time. Limit discussion to 15 minutes.

Once Upon a Time . . .

Suggest the club make up a play about their dream animal—even one they could likely never own, like a horse or lion. They may want to give the play for parents or split into several smaller groups and perform for each other.

Pets Take Time

As a group or individually, have the youngsters list all the things that must be done daily and weekly for a pet: feeding, exercising, cleaning.

What are some typical accidents to anticipate? Dead tropical fish to remove from tank, puppy’s bone hole in the yard that must be filled, kitty’s scratches on furniture that must be refinished.

Next, have the members estimate how much time each activity takes. Ask them to think whether they have that time and whether they want to spend their time that way.



“SHOW HOW

- How to handle your pet
- How to groom your pet
- How to prepare the equipment necessary to care for your pet

- How and what to feed your pet
- How to examine and observe your pet to tell whether it is healthy
- How to train your pet
- How to determine the proper time for and how to place your pet in a breeding situation
- How to prepare to care for a pregnant pet and the offspring
- How to prepare your pet and carry it when traveling

There are many more ideas for possible “show how’s.”

Information may be gathered at a library by checking out books on “pocket pets,” visiting a veterinarian at a small animal clinic, visiting someone else who raises or has your kind of pet, or checking with the Extension Office.

Pet Art

Have everyone sit around a table or in a circle on the floor. Give them each a piece of paper and a pencil or crayon. Blindfold all of them. Tell them to draw a picture of their favorite animal.

Leaders blindfold themselves and try it, too. After about 5 minutes, all remove blindfolds to show their pictures to the rest.

Leaders may want to start by showing their picture so the kids will see it doesn’t matter if they are silly pictures.

- How to keep an expense record of caring for your pet
- How to do research at the library so you may learn the life history of your pet and what the life history includes
- How to exhibit your pet for show