

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

HABITAT

Rodents live very close to the floor, so they breathe and inhale ammonia of their urine continuously. For that reason, it is very important to give a high importance to the habitat where they live and its cleanliness. An easy to disassemble and clean cage, non-dusty bedding like recycled paper is ideal. Exercise and intellectual stimulation is also part of good life hygiene for rodent, so enrichment of their habitat with little boxes, labyrinths, roulette games and access outside of the cage to interact with you are elements to consider for the improvement of their life quality and longevity.

It is very important to respect the ambient temperature for rodents to prevent stress that would predispose them to respiratory disease.

As soon as an animal is sick, he should be isolated from other animals to avoid contamination.

Wash your hands after all rodent handling because they can be pools form some viruses or bacteria.

RATS AND MICE

SCRATCHING AND HAIR LOSS

Mice often present **skin mites** when purchased in a pet shop

Hierarchy and sexual behavior often create fights between mice and cause **abscesses and skin ulcers** that are sometimes very hard to treat.

Ringworm is also one of the possible causes for hair loss around the face, head, neck and tail.

« **Ring tail** » is a young rat disease; the tail becomes necrotic and falls off.

SKIN TUMORS (All rodents)

Mammal gland adenocarcinoma is the most frequent tumor followed by fibrosarcoma in mice.

RECTAL PROLAPSE (All rodents)

This often happens after an effort to defecate. Intestinal parasites can be the cause and a stool analysis would help give a better diagnostic.

CERVICAL SALIVARY GLAND EDEMA: (Rats)

It is caused by a virus very contagious between rats. (Viral sialodacryoadenitis)

NOISY AND FAST BREATHING, SNEEZING, TILTED HEAD (All rodents)

Sendai virus and mycoplasmosis are the main respiratory way diseases in mice.

KIDNEY DISEASE (all rodents, especially rats)

The rat will drink and urinate a lot.

BACK LEG PARESIS, LOSS OF TAIL CONTROL, INCONTINENCE AND WEIGHT LOSS (Old rats)

With age a degenerative disease with a progressive impairment can install itself.

RED TEARS:

During stress or a disease, rats secrete porphyrins by the Harder gland and it can give a blood red colour. Always get the rat examined because there can be a underlying disease.

HAMSTER**ROUGH COAT:**

Hamsters fight a lot with each other and present a rough coat.

The Syrian hamster has a pair of sebaceous gland on the sides that is hormone-dependant and plays a part in territory marking.

A melanoma on the sides or elsewhere on the skin is the most common skin tumor.

Cheek pocket impaction:

These pockets are extensible and sometimes are impacted by food. The cause can be incisor and molar malocclusion.

Diarrhea:

In young hamsters, age 3-10 weeks, a bacterium (*Lawsonia intracellularis*) is the main diarrhea cause.

In adult hamsters, diarrhea appears after some antibiotics and the guilty bacteria is often **clostridium difficile**.

Weight loss:

A kidney or hepatic disease with amyloid infiltration of organs (amyloidosis) is often the cause of death in old hamsters

Weariness, abnormal breathing, nose and eye discharge:

Viral or bacterial pneumonia?

Exophthalmia:

Eye outside of its globe following an exaggerated pressure because of inadequate handling

Hamster tumors:

In older hamsters, lymphoma is the most common tumor and touches many organs like the thymus, the lymph, the liver, the spleen, etc.

GERBIL

Face and nose dermatitis:

The cause can be due to porphyrin secretions following a stress or a dry environment.

Fragile tail:

If you pull on the tip of tail, the skin can detach and become necrotic.

Skin gland:

They can be confused with tumors. In older gerbils, these glands can get infected or be the site of tumors.

Diarrhea:

Convulsing: 20- 40 % of gerbils develop epileptiform seizures. The cause is a deficiency of glutamine synthesis.

Old gerbil tumor: After 2 to 3 years old, gerbils develop tumors.

DEGU

Degus are from the same order as the chinchillas and the guinea pigs, dietary imbalance, automutilation and accident following inadequate handling.

Hair loss:

Follows fights between degus.

Dental problems:

Incisor malocclusion that generally follows a lack of hay in his daily diet.

Rhinitis and respiratory difficulty:

A benign bone tumor that obstructs the nasal cavity. (Odontoma)

Diabetes:

Following a pancreatic cells amyloidosis and a high sugar diet. The cataract is a consequence of diabetes.