

“I can give you a six-word formula for success: Think things through -- then follow through.”

- Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker

“The path to success is to take massive, determined action.”

- Anthony Robbins

“Patience, persistence and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success.”

- Napoleon Hill

“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will.”

- Vincent T. Lombardi

EXCELLENCE: Some succeed because they are destined to. Others succeed because they are determined to.

These insights remind us that, with the right attitude and tools, success is achievable!

Sincerely,

Your friends at **Companion Habitats**



Contact information:

Phone: (888) 831-1226

e-mail: sales@companionhabitats.com

website: www.companionhabitats.com

This book was created for retail business owners and managers dedicated to providing quality services and products for their customers and customers' cherished furry, scaled, and/or feathered family members.

Each of our contributing authors is known and well versed in their subject matter, and they share a combined wealth of pet knowledge. We hope you'll find many useful tips to help you gain the edge in retail.

Sincerely,

Your Friends at **Companion Habitats, Inc.**



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Why Should I Carry Pets & What Do I Need To Know?






by Nancy Reed, strategic planning & marketing manager, Companion Habitats

The market opportunity is huge and growing for pets and pet products. More recently, even large general merchandise chains, such as Walmart, Kmart and Target, hardware stores, garden supply stores and the like are now featuring pets and/or pet products with much success. Pets are naturally the center of attention, and are masters at self-promotion. All they ask for are some basic creature comforts. Then leave the rest up to them!



1. The benefits of carrying pets

- a. **They capture interest!** Drive customer traffic throughout your store—consumers are naturally drawn to critters.
- b. **Huge potential customer base!**¹
 - 2004 pet industry = \$33.5 billion spent on pets and pet merchandise
 - 64 million households own a pet
 - 40.6M - Dogs
 - 35.3M - Cats
 - 6.7M - Birds
 - 5.6M - Small Animals
 - 4.1M - Reptiles

Pet	Avg. annual \$ spent/pet (2004)				
	= \$420/dog (65M in U.S.)	X	years owned	=	<i>Huge future Sale\$ potential</i> about 378M pets are owned in the U.S.
	= \$200/cat (78M in U.S.)	X	years owned	=	
	= \$263/bird (17M in U.S.)	X	years owned	=	
	= \$128/small animal (17M in U.S.)	X	years owned	=	
	= \$152/reptile (9M in U.S.)	X	years owned	=	

- c. **Critters sell themselves!** Adults and children alike are drawn to that special animal magnetism and frequently find it difficult to resist.
- d. **Buying power!** When consumers purchase pets, they also purchase a great deal of corresponding merchandise and food for the pet.
- e. **Create future sales!** Pet purchases create demand for future merchandise and food purchases for the life of the pet.

2. What type of pets should I carry?

Considering your target audience, we recommend the following suggestions:

Resale / Production Use:

Birds	Mammals
SEASONAL: baby chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, etc.	Rabbits, Chinchillas, etc.

As Pets:

Birds	Mammals	Reptiles & Amphibians, etc. (Option if demand)
SMALL: Finches, Parakeets, Canaries, etc.	SMALL: Rabbits, Hamsters, Gerbils, Rats, Mice, Guinea	Snakes, Lizards, Frogs, Turtles, Hermit Crabs, etc.
MEDIUM: Love Birds, Conures, Cockatoos, Greys, Amazons, Macaws, Cockatiels, etc.	Pigs, Ferrets, Chinchillas, Sugar Gliders, etc. MEDIUM - LARGE: Puppies & Kittens	

3. How should I display my pets?

We recommend you display and house your critters in durable fixtures, which:

- Will withstand cleaning and wear over time
- Are designed to help control odor
- Provide a safe, nurturing environment for critters to live
- Are attractive, colorful and provide a professional appearance for your business
- Provide optimal viewing area and/or lighting to attract consumers and feature critters, without distracting from their natural attributes and beauty
- Offer a locking system to protect your critters and investment

Notes:

- a. Fixtures should be kept clean and neat—Keep in mind: sick, lethargic pets will not only reflect poorly on your business, but they will be difficult to sell
- b. Remember many people are sensitive about the proper treatment of animals and it is in your best interest to reflect this value in how you care for your critters

4. What should I look for when purchasing fixtures to house and display pets for my business?

- a. **Think - investment value!** Select quality constructed fixtures that are easy to clean and maintain and will not show premature wear and deterioration.

- Ex: In many cases, Companion Habitats' fixtures have been in retail environments for over 8-10 years.
- Take advantage of depreciating your fixture costs over time.

b. **Think - capture attention!**

Select attractive fixtures that will capture interest and showcase your pets, yet do not distract from their natural beauty.



- Ex: Companion Habitats' fixtures come in a variety of colors, offer lighting and other attractive features.

- c. **Think - healthy, happy pets sell better!** As mentioned above... If critters are lethargic and sickly, this will not only reflect poorly on your business, but they will be difficult to sell.
- Good ventilation will not only help support a healthy environment for the pets, but will also help with odor control.
- d. **Think - protect your investment!** Do not overlook the ability to lock your units to help ensure the safety of your pets and to protect your investment.
- e. **Think - protect your businesses' reputation!** The fixtures you display and house your pets in directly reflect on your business. It is in your best interest to demonstrate your commitment to the health and welfare of animals, birds, etc. and to feature fixtures that are attractive and professional in appearance.
- f. **Think - dependable customer support!** Weigh dependable vendor customer service and support into your fixture decisions
- As with any capital equipment investment, it is critical that you can count on your pet-fixture vendor for customer service support for the life of the fixture.

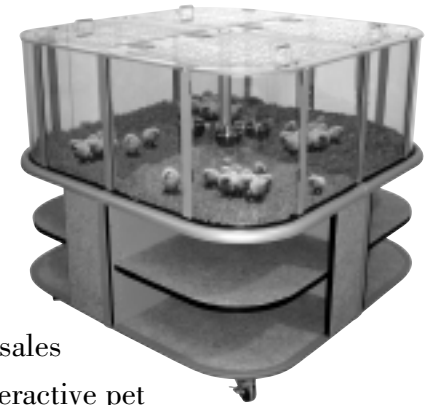
5. **We've never carried pets before...Any tips in how to care for them?**

- We suggest you begin with a small variety and build from there. Perhaps try a couple types of birds, small animals, and maybe even reptiles if they are popular in your area.
- Research the care for each type of pet you have selected. There is a great deal of information on the Internet, through local veterinarians, etc., which you will find very helpful.

Note: See more detailed care tips featured throughout this booklet. 🐾

¹Statistics & Trends (2003 - 2004 APPMA [American Pet Products Manufacturing Association] National Pet Owners Survey)

Companion Habitats
Majestic Quad Petter



Pet retailers can optimize sales and profits by utilizing interactive pet fixtures to engage their customers, such as the popular Companion Habitats' Quad Petter. How can they resist? Petting zoos are the perfect interactive sales tool and can provide a professional presentation to capture attention, spotlighting puppies, kittens, rabbits, guinea pigs, baby chicks and small birds and more. The Quad Petter features new lockable, removable, clear acrylic lids available to protect the critters and your investment. Units are available in over 200 colors to compliment any store. Other petting zoo designs and sizes are also available.



Companion Habitats, Inc.®

How Do I Find Pet Suppliers & What Do I Look For?

Knowledge is Power

Some breeders and brokers (suppliers) operate illegally, without licenses. But many animals, birds and reptiles are sold through licensed wholesalers and distributors, and are licensed by the state and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Those that operate without a license are many times labeled as "backyard breeders". They operate without a license and are inexperienced. They merely sell litters of puppies, kittens, mice, etc. for a quick profit. They

have no idea of the genetic health history of their breeding stock and little idea about how to raise quality, healthy pets. They are uneducated about the early phases of socialization and unable to spot temperament variations, illnesses, etc.

How can retailers know that the animals, birds and reptiles sold in their stores are raised and handled in responsible ways?

Whether it be a puppy, bird or hamster, pets for sale in retail stores follow supply chains that extend back to the wholesaler and the breeder. Retailers who want to provide healthy, quality animals should select their suppliers carefully by getting referrals and asking a lot of questions.



Anytime you're dealing with an animal supplier, whether directly with a breeder, wholesaler or distributor, your first step should be to get references. By contacting these references and speaking to other retailers, it may help you zero in on the most reputable and best options for your store. You will also quickly learn of those to avoid.

Realize though, because the nature of the business is very competitive, once people find a good supplier, they may not really want to share their source with somebody else. There is also sometimes, a shortage of small animals and specialty pets, so a fellow retailer may worry that if someone finds their sources, then they'll get half as many animals as they wanted.

Check them out

- If possible, visit the breeder in person if you plan to do a substantial amount of business with them.
- Call the BBB for the metropolitan area closest to the breeder and ask about the number of complaints filed, if any. Also ask if those complaints have been resolved or remain open.

- Call the Office of the Attorney General, Consumer Fraud or Complaint Division, of the State in which the breeder resides. Ask for the total number of complaints filed against the breeder, if any, and obtain any written information or reports they may have on file from past or active investigations. Matters of public record can be mailed or faxed directly to you for a nominal fee.
- Call the law enforcement agency closest to your breeder to determine the number of visits, if any, they have made to the premises.

Where do I find suppliers?

Retail consultants state the best method to find a wholesaler would be by referral, and the next best method would be through industry advertisements. Industry publications and trade shows offer a venue for suppliers, but beware as just because they advertise or attend shows, they aren't necessarily reputable. Many retailers still claim that word-of-mouth is the primary way they found their own breeders. If you are a retailer just entering the business of selling pets, you might want to ask your dry-goods distributor if they recommend any particular pet wholesalers. Also, using several suppliers ensures a steady supply and will allow you to evaluate deliveries, the health of the pets, etc. A good reputable breeder will welcome site visits; if they don't, this should draw a red flag.

U.S. PET INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS

<u>Publication</u>	<u>Main Number</u>	<u>Websites</u>
Pet Product News	(630) 515-9493	www.petproductnews.com
Pet Age	(312) 663-4040	www.petage.com
Pet Business	(212) 979-4800	www.petbusiness.com

<u>Large National Pet Industry Trade Shows</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Main Number</u>
Global Pet Expo	March	(443) 640-1060
H.H. Backer Spring Trade Show	April	(312) 663-4040
Super Zoo West	September	(800) 999-7295
H.H. Backer Christmas Trade Show	October	(312) 663-4040

Pet Industry Associations

The following association list may be of help to get your search started, but should not be seen as an endorsement of these sites or their contents.

WWPSA - World Wide Pet Suppliers Association	www.wwpsa.org
APPMA - American Pet Product Manufacturers Association	www.appma.org
SPBE - The Society of Parrot Breeders & Exhibitors	www.spbe.org
IAS - International Aviculturists Society	www.funnyfarmexotics.com
IRBA - International Reptile Breeders Association	www.irba.com
AFRMA - American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association	www.afrma.org
Fanciers (Cat) Breeder Referral List	www.breedlist.com
ARBA - American Rabbit Breeders Association	www.arba.net
CFA - Cat Fanciers Association	www.cfa.org
AKC - American Kennel Club	www.akc.org/breeds

Probing Questions - Get Answers...

Asking questions of your breeder or supplier is recommended before purchasing pets, such as:

1. **How long has the supplier been in business?** Longevity is a definite advantage. To last in a very competitive market speaks volumes.
2. **Are they state or USDA licensed?** If they are, this will show that basic husbandry and cleanliness standards have been met, and the facilities are inspected regularly to ensure compliance. Utilizing licensed suppliers will also offer accountability if a problem does arise.
3. **When dealing with a distributor or wholesaler, ask about their sources.** Wholesalers and distributors should know their source (breeder); or it draws a red flag.
4. **You can ask the supplier how often they have veterinarian visits of their facility.** Breeders and wholesalers should be associated with a veterinarian.
5. **What are their delivery methods?** Delivery methods are a very important consideration. Climate-controlled trucks or vans equipped with thermostats, ventilation systems, air purifiers and generators, and regular checks during transit, are features of reputable wholesalers' own delivery systems.
 - Utilizing third-party air or ground carriers can adversely affect mortality rates. Typical ground carriers are not trained in transporting animals.
6. **Do they offer health guarantees or live delivery on the animals?**
7. **What is their policy on crediting for DOA animals?**
8. **How often do they distribute availability lists? How do they distribute them?**
9. **Who selects the animals I order? Do sales people communicate specific requests to those who fill the orders?**
10. **Are the puppies or kittens micro-chipped?**

Build a Relationship

Communication not only answers preliminary questions, but it also builds a relationship between the supplier and the retailer. You want to make sure you take care of your supplier and they will take care of you.

With increased professionalism in the industry, retailers can expect higher standards when dealing with live animals. There is a lot more variety, and customers are demanding more. Thankfully, the animals are being treated much more humanely than in the past. 🐾

Sources:

Knowledge is Power, Where do the pets come from?, by Wendy Bedwell-Wilson, Pet Product News, August 2005
Breeder Checklist, www.almosthomerescue.org/breeders

Animal Habitats, Fixtures & Displays: A Bit of Homework Can Go a Long Way!

by Nancy Reed, strategic planning & marketing manager, Companion Habitats

When deciding how to house and care for small animals, birds or reptiles, it is important to understand the difference between a cage (which is merely an enclosure to confine) and a habitat (which more closely emulates a pet's natural environment).

What should retailers look for when purchasing a habitat?

Retailers should seek quality constructed units that are easy to clean and maintain, will not easily show wear and deterioration over time, and will demonstrate the retailer's commitment to the health and welfare of its pets. Many products currently on the market do not provide easy access for cleaning and are primarily constructed of wood, which will deteriorate with mold and mildew over time. In the long run, retailers can actually end up spending more money by repeatedly replacing poorly constructed products, rather than initially purchasing a well-made, higher-priced product.

Select attractive habitats that will capture interest and enhance – not distract from – the pets' natural beauty. Enclosures should be well lit for optimal viewing and the health of its inhabitants. Many pets, such as reptiles, require full-spectrum lighting and humidity, which is critical for their health.

In addition, fixtures should have an effective ventilation system to circulate fresh air throughout and diminish odors. If there is a heating system, it should be easily regulated according to individual needs. Be sure to consider recommended feeding requirements, such as dishes, bottles, etc., for each pet's food and liquid intake. It is highly recommended that you research the proper care and feeding requirements for each species you decide to offer.

Don't overlook safety. Select units with proper locks and safety features to protect the pets and your business from tampering and theft. Lastly, don't

What are some of the key things retailers need to know about pet fixtures?

One thing is certain: Healthy, happy pets will attract customers and will sell. Therefore, when a retailer has decided on, or is considering, carrying and selling pets in their store, it is vital that they recognize the importance of maintaining the health of these animals (pets). By understanding the best way to feature and promote small pets, retailers will quickly find good homes for them. The care and nurturing that the retailer provides these pets directly reflects positively or negatively on a store's image in the community.

When deciding how to house and care for small animals, birds or reptiles, it is important to understand the difference between a cage (which is

merely an enclosure to confine) and a habitat (which more closely emulates a pet's natural environment).

Breeders and wholesalers should be associated with a veterinarian.

forget to provide entertainment for pets, such as toys, things to climb on, etc. Customers will enjoy watching pets play and interact.

What are some helpful tips in caring for pets?

Proper employee training is critical to ensure consistency in caring for pets. With this in mind, fixtures should be monitored throughout the day for cleanliness. Some odor is expected, but it should not be overwhelming. To control odor, fixtures should be free of old feces, dead prey, food items and any other waste.

Avoid drafts and temperature fluctuations while maintaining an overall store temperature of about 75°F. Don't position animal enclosures in direct or constant sunlight, as heat can build up quickly, causing dehydration and/or death. Each species has specific heat requirements, with reptiles and birds, in particular, requiring additional heat.

Research the best substrate for your various pets, as some can cause skin irritation or respiratory problems.

Provide fresh water in clean bowls or bottles that are absent of algae or scum, and ensure that they are never empty. Watch for listlessness, diarrhea, dull coats and runny eyes, which can be signs of illness. Quickly separate ill animals from others sharing the same enclosure.

How can retailers help their customers to be responsible pet owners?

Our experience has shown that many customers purchase pets on impulse, and they may be quite unprepared for the responsibilities of their new pet once they get home and reality sets in. Retailers can seize this opportunity! Build a relationship with your customer and increase sales by strategically placing helpful related signage, literature, food and toy products near pet habitats. 🐾

It is important to understand the difference between a cage and a habitat.

The Power of Good Merchandising, Store Layout & Animal Display

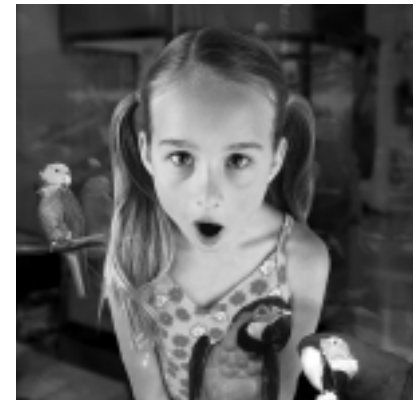
by Jim McAdoo, retail business consultant

General merchandise and specialty retail store owners have a unique opportunity to provide an exhilarating shopping experience for their customers by offering pets and pet supplies.

Consumers shopping for pets are particularly interested in new products. This interest, along with the understanding that customers are shopping for “another member of the family”, increase the need to be sensitive to sharp merchandising, eye-catching store décor and outstanding customer service. Every visit should be a “win-win” scenario for the customer and the retailer. Above all, there needs to be a compelling reason for customers to keep coming back.

Following are some fundamental guidelines to consider when setting up pets and pet products in your store.

Store Layout & Design Upon entering your store, your customers should immediately be hit with some type of positive “WOW” factor. Because time is a precious commodity for all shoppers, the strategic way your store is laid out is critical to the shopping experience. The first impression for the customer should always be, “This is a fun, clean store”. The store should be “departmentalized” to maximize the opportunity for customers to navigate the entire store. And if customers must walk to the back of the store, make the trip interesting for them. This is where placement of pet units and merchandise can add that magic “WOW” factor throughout your store.



Merchandising Merchandise should be grouped to inspire multiple purchases. Commodity items, such as food, should always have high margin “go with” items nearby, such as treats, toys and other pet necessities. When selling new pets, ensure that all the cage/tank components (proper size cage/tank, bedding, toys, food, etc.) are properly displayed and available. Merchandise should also be presented in a manner that allows the customer to make informed decisions.

Customer Service The key to excellent customer service is the combi-

nation of understanding the needs of the customer and knowing exactly how to respond. The mix of customers that shop in your store have a variety of needs, ranging from simple, quick and courteous service to helping a prospective pet owner make the decision whether owning a pet is a responsible choice. Likewise, the ability to provide exceptional customer service may not be inherent in the store staff. Training is imperative. Different areas of the store may even have different service requirements. Sometimes a friendly smile and simple “hello” is all that the customer needs. Regardless of the situation, it is essential to always make eye contact to ensure the customer knows help is available.

Animal Welfare A store's reputation can be directly related to the conditions in which the critters (pets) live. All stores should have a regular maintenance schedule that ensures fixtures are clean, safe and enjoyable places to live. Customers will more likely buy a pet that appears to be happy and well attended to. Additionally, keeping the habitats free of odor will certainly add to the overall appeal of the store.

Competition It is important to continue to watch your competition to see what they are doing that is successful and see what you can do that differentiates. By adding pets, you will be on the early side of this trend in your industry. Thus, you can gain that important strategic edge over your competition.

Training A well-trained store associate is the cornerstone to running a successful business. Whether you own a single store or a group of stores, a formalized training program in each of the above elements is essential to running a profitable business. Adding pets may be a big change in your business and a good training program can provide the necessary support needed to optimize the opportunity. 🐾

The first impression should always be, “This is a fun, clean store”.

Store Tips for Small Animals

by Debbie Ducommun, author and founder of the Rat Fan Club and Assistance & Teaching Society

The most common small pets in order of popularity are rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, rats, mice, gerbils, ferrets and chinchillas. With the exception of hamsters, all of these animals are social and do best with same-sex companions of the same species. Single individuals of social species need intensive human attention to be happy.

Diet For rats, mice, gerbils and hamsters, commercial blocks or nuggets for that species, seed mix as an occa-

sional treat, and a variety of fruits and veggies make up an appropriate diet. For rabbits, guinea pigs and chinchillas use commercial pellets for that species, grass hay, fresh greens and a small amount of fruits and veggies. For ferrets, a commercial ferret food is necessary.

Cages Habitats (cages) should be at least three times the body length of an adult. Most species enjoy ramps and multiple stories (low ones for guinea pigs). Solid floors and shelves are best, as wire floors can cause leg injuries and foot sores, especially in guinea pigs and rats. If using a wire cage, care must be taken so the mesh is small enough to prevent escape. Cage pans measuring 3-4" deep will help contain mess.

Accessories Small rodents require a water bottle, a dish for fresh foods, and a dry food dispenser. For rabbits, guinea pigs and chinchillas provide a non-tip food dish or dispenser, hayrack and water bottle. Ferrets need a non-tip water dish, a food dish and a litter box. Rabbits also require a litter box, while mice, rats and hamsters will use them occasionally.

Sleeping/Hiding Quarters Wood or plastic boxes/houses, or grass nests can be used. Ferrets and rats also love hammocks, and ferrets and guinea pigs enjoy fake sheepskin beds.

Toys All caged pets require toys for exercise and mental health. Tip: Increase toy sales by placing colorful samples in display cages. All the animals enjoy tubes. Small rodents and chinchillas enjoy exercise wheels; solid-surface wheels are recommended, such as the Wodent Wheels brand. Other good toys for small rodents are ladders, branches, ropes and food toys, which make them work to get treats. Many bird toys also work well. Rabbits



like small toys they can toss around. Ferrets like balls, toys that move or bounce back when touched, and toys they can carry in their mouth. **WARNING:** *Foam and rubber toys are deadly for ferrets; ferret chew toys must be either indestructible or digestible.*

Bedding/litter Pine and cedar shavings contain toxins that can damage the respiratory tract and liver. Safe products include those made of paper or aspen and other hardwoods. Pellets made from straw and hay, even rabbit food, can be used as litter for small rodents. Tip: Encourage customers to buy the safe products by using them in display fixtures.

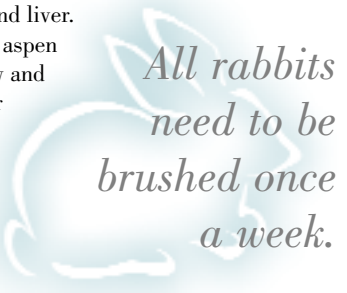
Handling Always use two hands when picking up animals. Scoop up smaller animals with both hands, and provide support to the forequarters and hindquarters of the larger animals. Animals should only be picked up by the tail in an emergency, and then only by the base of the tail. In many species the skin will slip off the tip of the tail.

Socialization Animals sold for pets should be well socialized to humans so they are eager for human interaction. Effective socialization requires only that the babies be handled by humans daily; socialization prior to weaning is usually more successful than after weaning. Guinea pigs are born in an advanced state (eyes open, a full coat of hair, able to run and eat solid food), so human socialization must begin the day they are born for optimum results.

A search may be necessary to find breeders who socialize their animals. Properly socializing babies takes time (although not as much time as socializing them later!), and for this reason, a breeder who offers such animals is justified in charging more for them. As a retailer, you are then justified in passing on the higher cost to your customers. Make sure your customers know that you have the friendliest animals in town! Use signs to explain why your pets are better than average.

Temperature and Light Chinchillas and ferrets are highly sensitive to heat and must be kept below 80°F. Other small pets must be kept below 90°F, with the ideal temperature range for all species being between 60-75°F. Keep all cages away from windows and heating/air conditioning units. Rats and other burrowing animals must have complete darkness at night.

Grooming All rabbits need to be brushed once a week; long-haired rabbits need to be brushed or combed daily. They may also need their toenails trimmed regularly. Guinea pigs need their toenails trimmed regularly and occasionally need a bath. All guinea pigs benefit from an occasional brushing, while long-haired guinea pigs need to be combed daily. Chinchillas require a dust bath 3-7 times per week, while gerbils need one 2-3 times a week. Rats sometimes need their tails scrubbed. Ferrets need their nails trimmed, ears cleaned and teeth brushed (with cat toothpaste and toothbrush) every 2-3 weeks. A bath once a month is adequate for ferrets, as more frequent bathing actually increases their musky smell.



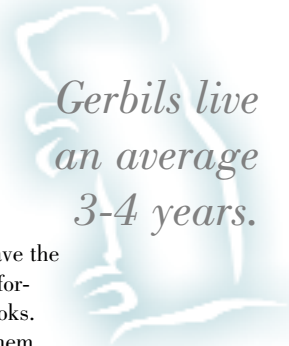
*All rabbits
need to be
brushed once
a week.*

Health Problems The most common health problems are caused by improper care: spine fractures in rabbits (from mishandling); fight wounds in hamsters and mice; birthing problems (from being bred too old) and foot sores (from improper cage flooring) in guinea pigs; foot and leg injuries in rats (from improper cage flooring); tail injuries (due to tail grabbing) in small rodents; swallowed foreign objects in ferrets; and respiratory irritation in gerbils (from using pine or cedar shavings).

Special Species Traits Rabbits should be spayed or neutered to prevent behavior problems. Guinea pigs must have supplemental vitamin C in their diet. Hamsters will hibernate if they get too cold, which can cause them to appear dead. Domestic rats can breed at only 5 weeks of age, so males and females must be separated at this age. Male mice are aggressive and cannot live with other males, but the females are very social and do best in groups. Gerbils urinate very little so their cage needs to be cleaned only once a month. Ferrets must have a series of vaccinations similar to those for dogs and cats, and they must be spayed or neutered by about 6 months of age. (Unspayed female ferrets will die.) Chinchillas have no toenails.

Life spans Rabbits average 7 to 10 years up to 15 years. Guinea pigs average 4 to 6 years up to 10 years. Syrian hamsters average 2-2 1/2 years up to 5 years. Dwarf Russian hamsters average 1-1 1/2 years up to 3 years. Rats average 2-2 1/2 years up to 5 years. Mice average 1 1/2-2 years up to 5 years. Gerbils average 3-4 years up to 6 years. Ferrets average 6-8 years up to 15 years. Chinchillas average 8-10 years up to 20 years.

Provide Information Make sure customers have the best experience possible with their pets by making information available. Use handouts and stock pet care books. If pet owners have questions you can't answer, refer them to clubs, libraries, the Internet or local Veterinarian. 🐾



*Gerbils live
an average
3-4 years.*

Feather Your Profits with Birds

Advice on Keeping Birds Happy & Healthy and How to Display Them

by Robyn Bright, pet, wildlife and nature consultant, author and photographer

the tail is not clean. Birds that are sick will not preen themselves (which healthy birds will do every day), not vocalize, eat little to nothing at all, and/or sleep most of the day with their feathers all fluffed up. Healthy birds will be active, chatter often - especially in the morning and late in the afternoon, preen frequently, and be very alert. Because birds try not to show any signs that they are sick, it is important to watch birds carefully for a few minutes two to three times a day to learn what is their “normal” behavior. Any bird that suddenly changes the way it behaves in the store, stops preening, or looks lethargic should be checked by an avian veterinarian immediately.

Droppings are also a good indicator of health. They should be well formed with the consistency of custard and contain both a white solid part and a dark color (usually mossy green) part. Although some birds will deviate from this slightly, and may have runny stools for three to four days after first coming into the store due to stress, the fecal matter should soon look more “normal”. But if a bird has been in the store for weeks and suddenly has a drastic change in the color or consistency of their droppings with no explanation (such as color change due to eating fruits like blueberries), this may be a sign that something is wrong with a bird. It is always best to be alert to any changes so illness can be caught early instead of waiting until the bird is obviously

When any new birds first arrive in the store, quarantine them from birds already in the store and make sure their eyes are bright, their feathers appear smooth, and their nostrils are clear. Once placed in their new cage, birds should sit on a perch upright, looking alert; by the end of the first day they should show some interest in what is going on around them. Signs of sickness can include: sitting quietly on the perch most of the day fluffed up; dull looking eyes; no self-care of feathers, so they don't look neat and flat; nostrils that are clogged and/or have a discharge; sneezing; tail “pumping” back and forth with breathing; excessive itchiness where the bird will pick at itself sometimes with quick movements; and the area under



sick, at which point it may be too late.

All birds should get a variety of foods in their diet to stay healthy, along with a supplement sprinkled on the food that contains vitamins, minerals, and amino acids. Many of the finches, parakeets (budgerigars) and cockatiels do eat seeds as a normal diet in the wild; therefore, they can be given a high quality seed mix along with the appropriate type of pellets, or just pellets if that is what they have been fed before coming into the store. They should also be given millet, vegetables and fruit (except avocado, which is poisonous to birds). Finches, which include canaries, will especially enjoy dark, leafy greens. All food provided should be cut up into small pieces. Birds in the parrot family, however, do not need their food cut up as much. The parrot family includes all parakeets, cockatiels, conures, lovebirds, caiques, greys, amazons, cockatoos and macaws; these birds enjoy all kinds of food, including not only lots of veggies and some fruit, but also pasta, multi-grained bread, cooked eggs, and almost anything that is not sugary, salty, or greasy. (Absolutely no chocolate as it is poisonous to birds!) The more variety of foods a bird is given, the healthier it will stay. Be aware that “new” foods will not always be eaten right from the start, but need to be offered daily, sometimes for two to three weeks, before a bird will try them.

Display all birds in fixtures that are large enough for them to flap their wings easily, as they will do this now and then for exercise in the cage. Include perches in all display fixtures that have different diameters so the bird's feet are not always gripping the same sized perch. Offer a beak conditioner and cuttlebone in each fixture to keep the beak trim. Use any paper or bedding that is not too lightweight, as shavings will fly about, and avoid using corncob, as it may cause fungal infections in birds. Be sure bedding is changed often (two or more times a week, depending on the number and sizes of birds in the cage). Food and water must be changed daily and dishes should be scrubbed out two to three times a week or more, as needed.

Lights over the birds can remain on anywhere from nine to eleven hours a day. Lastly, include in the display fixtures appropriate toy sizes for each bird, especially those in the parrot family, as these birds are extremely intelligent and this will keep them mentally healthy and active. 🦜

Healthy birds will chatter often, especially in the morning and late afternoon.

Basic Care of Herps

by Brent D. Seegers, president and CEO of Ectotherm

ensure proper health of these magnificent creatures. This article merely provides the basics on caring for herps. More information can be obtained through sources such as *Reptiles Magazine*, books, herpetological societies, and veterinarians.

Housing In general, the following groups of reptiles are commonly sold in retail stores: snakes, tortoises, turtles, and lizards. Amphibians include toads, frogs, newts, and salamanders. Fixture requirements vary depending on the species. The first consideration when choosing a fixture is to understand the herp's natural behaviors and from what environment they originate. Fixture selection can be broken down into four major categories based on the animal's natural habitat.

Type*	Description	Common in Pet Trade
Arboreal	Lives in trees	Iguana, Tree frogs, Day geckos, Tree boas
Terrestrial	Lives on the ground surface	Leopard gecko, Tortoises, Most snakes
Fossorial	Lives underground, digs & burrows	Sand fish, Rosy boas, Some toads
Aquatic	Lives in or near a water environment	Turtles, Newts, Frogs, Some lizards

* Note: Many species require a combination of the above-mentioned habitats.

Substrates Similarly, the fixture substrate (bedding) needs to match the herp's biological needs. When choosing a substrate, the following considerations need to be met:

- Substrate is safe if ingested (will not cause impaction in intestine)
- Substrate can be easily spot-cleaned (removing fecal material)
- Substrate is not dusty
- Substrate has no toxic odors

The following chart represents safe substrates and substrates that should NOT be used.

Safe Substrates	Substrates to Avoid
Pelleted/Shredded aspen bedding	Cedar chips
Cypress wood chips	Corn cob bedding
Pelleted hays or plant fibers	Crushed walnut shells
Indoor/Outdoor carpet	Silica sand
Paper	Cat litter
Moss (toads/tree frogs)	Aquarium/Pea gravel

Fixture Décor Decorating a herp's fixture is not just for cosmetic reasons. Fixture décor provides environmental conditions necessary to maintain a healthy herp in captivity. A hide area is required for most reptiles; this can be as simple as a hollowed out log or commercial plastic hide box made for reptiles. Additionally, flat rocks can be configured to make multiple hiding areas.

Introduction Reptiles and amphibians, collectively referred to as herps, are a very unique and highly complex group of organisms. There are over 13,000 different species of herps found on earth. A growing number of species are now being kept as pets. Caring for reptiles and amphibians can be a rewarding and fascinating experience; however certain basic guidelines need to be followed to

Artificial or real plants provide shelter and make the reptiles feel safe and hidden. Every effort should be taken to reduce the animals' stress and create a natural setting in captivity.

Heating and Lighting Herps are ectothermic (cold blooded) creatures, meaning they rely on environmental energy to regulate their body temperature. Thus the retailer or pet owner needs to simulate natural heating and lighting requirements. There are two types of lighting used in conjunction with herps: fluorescent and incandescent. Fluorescent lights are used to provide ultraviolet light (UVB), which promotes the production of vitamin D3 in herps and is necessary for proper skeletal growth. Incandescent light bulbs serve a dual purpose, providing both heat and visible light. Precautions must be taken to protect herps from getting too close to incandescent bulbs, which may cause burning. Incandescent bulbs should not be the sole source of heat for the animal. Under the tank heaters, ceramic heat emitters and heat tape can be used to provide additional heat. Although reptiles and amphibians are ectothermic they need cooler areas to thermo regulate their body temperature, thus a thermal gradient (temperature range) needs to be established in the herp's fixture.

It may be necessary to adjust the humidity level, depending on the needs of your herp. Misting the enclosure, providing standing water, or adding hydrophilic substrates such as moss or vermiculite can easily achieve this.

Diet Requirements Water dishes with fresh water should be provided at all times. Soiled water should be removed immediately to prevent the growth of bacteria. For insect-eating herps, live foods such as crickets, wax worms, super worms, and mealworms should be provided. Super worms and mealworms, in general, should be fed sparingly due to the high amount of indigestible exoskeleton and low nutritional value.

A majority of snakes feed on whole animals such as rodents. Rodent-eating snakes should only be fed pre-killed mice. This reduces the risk of injury to the snake and promotes less aggressive behaviors.

Herbivorous reptiles rely totally on plant material and do not eat animal protein. Feeding animal protein to herbivorous reptiles causes serious health problems and must be avoided.

Many reptiles, however, are omnivorous, meaning they consume both plant and animal material and require unique, varied diets. Commercially prepared foods can be a valuable addition to a herp's diet. However, certain ingredients such as soy, corn, sugar, and wheat should be avoided as they have been linked to health problems in reptiles and amphibians.

In captivity herps require dietary supplementation in the form of calcium, vitamins, and other minerals. Supplementation is an integral component to ensure proper care of reptiles and amphibians. The amount of supplementation needed varies among species and must be researched before administering. Over-supplementation can have toxic effects on reptiles and amphibians.

While there are many components required to maintain proper health in captive reptiles and amphibians, each is important and should be regulated accordingly. 🐸

A hide area is required for most reptiles.

Authors



Nancy Reed is the strategic planning & marketing manager for Companion Habitats, Inc. Since its inception in 1986, Companion Habitats has been devoted to providing the Pet Industry with unique and exceptional quality pet habitats, cages, fixtures and accessories, and has established itself as the premier provider. The company is considered a market leader offering outstanding designs and state-of-the-art products, exceptional quality, unparalleled service and is committed to providing safe and nurturing environments for inhabitants such as birds, reptiles and small animals. For more information, you can contact Nancy at: Phone: (888) 831-1226 e-mail: nancyr@companionhabitats.com



Jim McAdoo is vice president of business development for TRINITY, LLC in Metuchen, NJ. He has worked over 20 years in the retail industry for leading companies such as K-Mart, The Limited, Toys R Us and PETCO Animal Supplies. While at PETCO, he led the development and initial store rollout of the company's "Millennium" prototype store design. For more information, you can reach Jim at: Phone: (732) 225-1256 e-mail: jimmcadoo@optonline.net



Debbie Ducommun is known as "The Rat Lady" and is the founder of The Rat Fan Club and the non-profit organization Rat Assistance & Teaching Society. She is the author of the care book *Rats, Practical, Accurate Advice from the Expert* and the booklet *Rat Health Care*. She also writes a monthly column on small animals for Pet Business magazine. For more information you can contact Debbie at: Address: The Rat Fan Club, 857 Lindo Lane, Chico, CA 95973 Phone: (530) 899-0605 e-mail: ratlady@sunset.net Websites: www.ratfanclub.org and www.petrats.org.



Robyn Bright has a master's degree in animal behavior specializing in parrots. She has studied birds in South America and Australia, worked as a veterinary technician, and written a monthly bird column, since 1997, and has been involved in the pet industry at both retail and manufacturer levels since 1974. She has written numerous educational materials for all kinds of pets and is a free lance writer, consultant and published photographer specializing in pets, wildlife, and nature. For more information, you can contact Robyn at: Phone: (978) 929-9331 e-mail: rbrightsun@yahoo.com



Brent D. Seegers is president and CEO of Ectotherm. Ectotherm is the industry leader in providing innovative products for the herpetological and invertebrate industry and offers products preferred by zoos, universities, museums, pet stores and pet owners nationwide. For more information, you can contact Brent at: Phone: (877) 274-5499 Website: www.ectotherm.com

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