Basic Care and Husbandry of Degu's
Avian and Exotic Animal Care
(919) 844-9166

Biological Facts:
• Resembles a large gerbil.
• Body weight ranges from 170-300gm.
• Head and body length is 12.5-19.5 cm.
• Tail is 10.5-16.5cm
• Normal body temp is 101.8F
• Litter size ranges from 1-10 pups. 6-7 is average.
• Life span is 5-8 years

Behavior:
• Degu’s are diurnal and do not hibernate. They dig elaborate burrows, are highly sociable and communicate via vocalizations and postures.
• If Degus are not given social interaction and physical stimuli, they may become aggressive or self mutilate.
• Fighting is rare, even when new introductions occur.
• They enjoy human interaction.

Diet:
• Diet in the wild includes a wide variety of plants, roots, seeds, and fruit and livestock droppings.
• Daily diet is a mixture of 2-3 rodent blocks such as Oxbow Regal Rat and less than 1/4 cup Cavy Performance guinea pig chow, and unlimited Oxbow Timothy grass hay.
• Carrots, sweet potatoes, seeds, and peanuts are given sparingly as treats.
• To reduce the risk of diabetes and cataracts, foods containing sugar (apples, raisins, breakfast cereal, honey treat sticks, etc.) should be avoided.
• Other Hystricomorphs (chinchillas, cavies, etc.) seem to thrive on supplement vitamin C, so vitamin C may be important for the Degu as well.

Housing:
• Provide Degu’s a large cage with a running wheel and plenty of room to exercise.
• Shelves and branches for climbing will also be appreciated.
• Wood shavings, recycled paper products, and hay are all suitable bedding materials.
• Provide a dust bath as for chinchillas.
• Always house at least two Degus together.

Preventive Care:
• A complete bi-annual physical examination.
• Review of diet and husbandry.
• Annual fecal analyses.
• Avoid picking up by the tail, instead scoop up with two hands

Common Medical Conditions requiring Veterinary Attention:
• Diabetes is known to occur spontaneously in the Degu.
• Up to 20% of individuals in some colonies develop cataracts.
• Fatty liver disease is often associated with pregnancy toxemia. Diet may also play a roll. Limiting fatty foods such as seeds and peanuts may aid in prevention.