

## Common Mice Ailments

**The best advice is to consult your vet if you think your mouse may be ill.**

A sick mouse will usually be listless and may try to hide somewhere in the cage. It should be put in a spare cage immediately in case the illness is contagious; and to protect the healthy mice, clean and disinfect their cage.

**Pooing when held:** One way mice show fear is by pooing. The cure is for you to be more gentle, slower and quieter when handling your mouse.

**Droppings that are fat and green:** A healthy mouse will have faeces that vary from very dry, dark brown to larger, sticky and medium tan. Green droppings are abnormal so you should take your mouse to the vet immediately.

**Overgrown incisors:** This can result in injury to the mouth and difficulty eating. The teeth must be trimmed by the vet periodically.

**Mange:** Dry flaky patches, redness or loss of fur could indicate mange or



## Mice Facts

Mice are social animals and should be kept in groups of two or more; if kept singly they get lonely and spend most of their time sleeping or hiding. Choosing a mouse companion can be tricky as two males may fight and a male and a female will breed. If kept in pairs or more, females are best kept together. They are best introduced at a young age as older mice do not usually accept a new companion.

**Life Span:**  
1.5 to 3  
years

**Maturity:**  
12 weeks or  
longer

**Litter size:**  
4-13

**Weaning  
age:**  
3-4 weeks

**Respiratory  
rate:**  
94-163  
breaths per  
minute

**Size:**  
3 to 4  
inches long

**Ideal  
temperature:**  
69-72°F

**Heart rate:**  
325-780  
beats per  
minute

**The Environmental Animal Sanctuary and Education (EASE)** is a registered charity (no. 1089160) which promotes all aspects of the human/companion animal relationship. Our services include the provision of a Preparing for Pet Loss programme as well as education in animal welfare. For more information about our work, contact:

EASE  
PO Box 292 Hatfield  
Hertfordshire AL9 6ZJ  
Email: [info@ease-animals.org.uk](mailto:info@ease-animals.org.uk)  
Website: [www.ease-animals.org.uk](http://www.ease-animals.org.uk)

Cartoons by  
**landers**  
[www.landerson.co.uk](http://www.landerson.co.uk)  
[cartoons@landerson.co.uk](mailto:cartoons@landerson.co.uk)



**Environmental Animal  
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## The EASE Guide to Caring for MICE



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Mice are undemanding pets, however they are timid by nature so you need to spend time getting to know them. The low purchase cost must be considered in relation to the time commitment and vets' fees for any treatment.

## A Home for your Mice

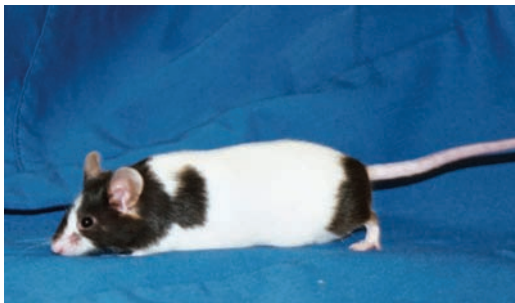
When choosing a home for your mice, pick one that gives them plenty of room. It needs to be big enough for toys and mouse buildings, a food dish and a water bottle plus ample room for them to move around.

Although mice are adaptable and do well in any type of metal, plastic or glass habitat, the most common and safest choice is the aquarium. A ten-gallon aquarium can accommodate a family of ten mice. As mice like to jump and climb you will need to attach a wire mesh cover to the top.

Bedding needs to be put on the bottom of the cage and should be light, fluffy and free from dust. Aspen shavings, dried alfalfa or timothy hay is preferred. Do NOT use pine or cedar bedding as these can cause liver disease, respiratory failure and skin irritation.

You will need to clean their cage and change the bedding every week if you have females but two or more times a week if you have a male. Keep the cage out of damp, draughty areas and direct sunlight.

Mice are extremely active creatures so provide them with plenty of things to play with, from solid exercise wheels to PVC piping to crawl in. Mice have incisor teeth that constantly grow. You can prevent overgrowth by providing something for them to gnaw on like a chew stick or treat to help wear the teeth down.



## Grooming your Mice

A mouse normally keeps its body clean and spends a great deal of time washing itself and therefore does not need grooming. Baby mice clean themselves even before their eyes are open.

## Food and Drink for your Mice

Clean, fresh water must be available at all times because mice can dehydrate easily.

A well-balanced diet will go a long way to keeping your mice healthy. Pelleted food is nutritionally ideal supplemented with small portions of fruit and vegetables such as lettuce, dandelion leaves, carrots, cabbage, apples and potatoes. Be careful to remove any fresh food that is not eaten before it goes mouldy as it will make the mice ill. As mice burn up energy quickly they need to eat often, so make sure some food is always in the cage. Mice enjoy picking around in their food by nature and are quite choosy.

**Do not feed your mice human snack foods.**



## Handling your Mice

Give your mice time to get used to their new home before handling them. Wait at least two days for them to settle in and begin by speaking softly to them. Then gently try resting one hand on the bedding, perhaps with some food on it, and allow the mice to come and sniff it. It will take time and patience for them to become acquainted with you.

Mice easily become frightened, so no matter how you handle them, always remember to be very gentle. The safest way to pick up a mouse is to grasp the base of its tail, NOT the tip, and slide your other hand under the mouse. For more security you can then form a roof over the mouse with your other hand.

## Sexing your Mice

Before three weeks of age the female can be distinguished by the presence of nipples which the male will not have. After three weeks and before sexual maturity it is quite difficult to discriminate between the sexes, although by comparison the male will have a longer space between the genitalia and the anus. After maturity the males will have fully developed testicles and can easily be distinguished from the females which have none.

## Mice

There are two types of domestic mice: the English fancy mouse and the American mouse or common mouse. The English fancy mouse is larger in size, has large ears and is calmer than the American mouse. The American mouse is mostly seen in pet stores whilst the English mouse is rarely found in pet stores and is best obtained through a reputable breeder.

Wild field mice are mostly grey so as to camouflage them from predators but pet mice are bred in many colours, markings and coat variations including standard, satin and long hair.

Mice have sensitive white whiskers which, from tip to tip, are almost as long as its body.

Although a mouse has large, bright eyes it is nearsighted. It makes up for its poor sight with a strong sense of smell and keen hearing.



## Mice Body Language

Mice have their own individual personalities and show their playfulness through body language. Some mice will be keep-fit fanatics, running on wheels and chasing around, while others will be homemakers, building comfortable nests. Some are playful while others are shy.

**Washing:** A mouse may wash its face continually if it feels insecure.

**'Barbering':** Occurs when a mouse nibbles away patches of fur from its own or another mouse's body. It can be a habit similar to nail biting in humans, however it can signal stress, mange or environmental contamination (e.g. residue cage disinfectant) and should be checked by a vet. More bedding and things to chew can be provided and/or reduce the number of mice in the cage.

**Playing:** No squeaks or very quiet ones. Mice play catch and chase each other but no wounds and no signs of stress or ill health will be seen.