**YVCipedia SMALL MAMMAL**

Sugar Glider Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

Sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) are small, nocturnal marsupials native to Australia and New Guinea. Adults typically measure 5–8 inches (excluding tail), weigh 2–5 oz, and can live 10–15 years with proper care. They are highly social, forming strong bonds in groups and with their owners. Their notable gliding membrane enables them to glide between branches up to 150 feet in the wild.

**Quick overview:**

* Nocturnal, thrive with gentle daily interaction
* Natural lifespan: 10–15 years with consistent care
* Require companionship—best housed in pairs or small groups

## **Housing & Environment**

Sugar gliders need spacious, tall enclosures that allow climbing and gliding behavior. A wire cage with a solid bottom and bar spacing of ≤¼" is ideal. Include nesting pouches, branches, and perches. They benefit from secure, escape-resistant housing with a height of at least 4 feet. Temperature should be maintained between 70–85°F, avoiding direct sunlight and drafts

**Habitat highlights:**

* **Minimum cage**: ~24″ × 24″ × 48″ (taller cages preferred for gliding)
* **Bar spacing**: ≤¼″ to prevent escapes
* **Enrichment**: Nesting pouches, branches, ropes, shelves
* **Environment**: 70–85°F; avoid cold drafts and bright light
* **Cleaning**: Spot-clean daily; full clean weekly

## **Diet & Nutrition**

In the wild, sugar gliders eat sap, nectar, pollen, insects, and occasional fruits. Captive diets should reflect this: 40–50% protein, moderate nectar or sap substitutes, limited fruits/vegetables (<10%), and supplemental calcium. Commercial insectivore/glider diets or chef-prepared “Leadbeater’s mix” can serve as dietary staples. Include live insects dusted with calcium for a nutritional boost.

**Diet essentials:**

* **Staple protein**: Insects (crickets/mealworms), cooked egg, insectivore blocks
* **Nectar substitute**: Honey-based or commercial nectar feeders
* **Fresh foods**: Fruits/veggies <10% of intake, rotated
* **Supplements**: Calcium + vitamin/mineral dust 1–2× weekly
* **Water**: Fresh in bottle and dish, changed daily

## **Healthcare**

Sugar gliders should see an exotic-savvy veterinarian within two months of acquisition and at least annually thereafter. Common issues include nutritional imbalances, dental disease, stress-related self-mutilation, parasites, and metabolic bone disease. Additional screening tests—including bloodwork and fecal analysis—may be recommended to detect early signs of disease.

**Health reminders:**

* **Vet exams**: Every 12 months at a minimum
* **Monitor for**: Lethargy, poor coat, weight loss, changes in appetite or behavior
* **Common conditions**: Nutritional imbalance, MBD, parasites, dental issues
* **Early intervention**: Sick sugar gliders may deteriorate rapidly; seek prompt care

## **Behavior & Handling**

Sugar gliders are intelligent and affectionate when handled gently in low-light conditions. Begin with pouch-based bonding and wear arms-friendly bonding gear. Scoop from beneath for handling; never scruff or grab by tail. Daily bonding time (1–2 hours) helps reduce anxiety. Self-mutilation or lack of appetite often indicates stress or social isolation, so monitor behavior carefully.

**Handling and social cues:**

* **Bonding**: Use bonding pouches or clothing to carry them
* **Handling safety**: Support chest and hindquarters; never scruff or tail-grab
* **Activity**: Peak between dusk and midnight; enjoy climbing and exploring
* **Behavioral red flags**: Self-mutilation, over-grooming, aggression

## **Grooming & Enrichment**

Sugar gliders are meticulous self-groomers and don’t require baths. Provide safe chew items (branches, bird toys), wheels (12"+ diameter, no central bars), ropes, nesting material, and regular toy rotation. Cage accessories should be sanitized weekly to maintain hygiene without stressing them.

**Enrichment Advice:**

* **Chew toys**: Untreated wood, bird-safe branches
* **Wheels**: ≥12″ diameter, no center bars, one per 2–3 gliders
* **Nest provision**: Fleece-lined pouches, cotton-free nesting material
* **Cage care**: Spot-clean daily, full clean weekly; neutral cleaners safe after cage fully dries

## **Fun Facts & FAQs**

* **Gliding ability**: Can glide up to 150 ft with their patagium stretched.
* **Social bonds**: Prefer pairs or groups; solitary gliders often become depressed.
* **“Crabbing”**: Soft chatter used for bonding; loud barking if startled.
* **Life expectancy**: With proper care, they often live 10–15 years.
* **Sensory scent**: Use scent glands on head/chest; dominant males may exhibit bald spots there.

### **Supplies Checklist**

* Tall wire cage with solid base and bar spacing ≤¼″
* Nesting pouches and soft fleece bedding
* Climbing branches, ropes, safe shelves
* Large exercise wheel (≥12″), chew toys, puzzle feeders
* Insectivore/glider block diet and nectar mix
* Live insects and calcium/vitamin dust
* Water bottle and bowl
* Bonding pouch or shoulder carrier
* Grooming brushes, cage-safe cleaning supplies
* Secure, ventilated pet carrier

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