



The Wonderful World of Small Companions

By Bridgette Kolas, The Humane Society for Seattle/King County

Small animals make wonderful companions. It is extremely important to do research on any small animal before bringing him into your home. Small animals have special nutritional and housing needs that must be met in order to provide a healthy and happy living environment. These little pets are usually nocturnal, meaning they are most active and make the most noise during the night. You will want to make sure that you have an area for your pet that will not disrupt your sleep, but it must also be an area that will not isolate your pet from the rest of the family.

How Much Care Do Small Animals Need?

If you are choosing to adopt a small animal because you feel he will be less work than a cat or dog, you are incorrect. Small animals tend to require much more daily care than some of our larger four-legged friends. You need to handle and socialize your pet on a daily basis. You need to provide daily exercise and enrichment outside of their habitat. You need to clean their cage on a daily basis. Although they are small in size, they are big in the responsibility department.

Is a Small Animal a Good Pet For My Child?

If you are choosing to adopt a hamster, mouse, rat, gerbil or guinea pig for your small child you should be aware that all of these animals are prey species. Small animals are usually food items for larger animals. They tend to be easily frightened by loud noises and quick movements. They also tend to nibble quite a bit: sometimes a finger gets mistaken for a baby carrot!

What Sort of Veterinary Care Will My Small Animal Need?

Small animals have a much shorter lifespan than most cats and dogs: take the longevity of these pets into consideration when choosing a new companion. You must also have a small animal veterinarian available for your new pet. Not all veterinarians are able to properly treat the illnesses and injuries that small animals may experience.

Small companions can be very social, friendly, entertaining and loving additions to many families. They make wonderful friends if you are committed to providing them with the care and socialization necessary for a happy and healthy life.