

# Sugar Glider

Sugar gliders are small, nocturnal marsupials that are native to the eastern coast of Australia and New Guinea. If provided with proper nutrition, husbandry, and socialization, they can make excellent pets for older children and adults.

## Housing/Enclosure

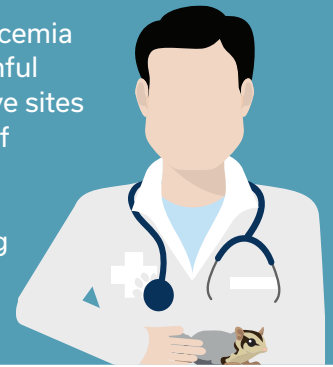
The minimum cage size for a single sugar glider is 36 inches x 24 inches x 36 inches. The bar spacing should be no more than 1/4 inch apart. PVC coated metal cages are preferred. We do not recommend galvanized metal cages since this can lead to heavy metal toxicity if your glider chews on the bars.

- Do not keep your sugar glider in a glass or plastic aquarium, due to poor ventilation, or a mesh sided cage, due to the risk of possible injury or trauma.
- Sugar gliders do best in a taller cage vs. a longer cage. Provide the largest cage possible as sugar gliders are extremely active.
- Food bowls should be difficult to tip over. For multiple gliders housed together, there should be multiple food and water stations.
- Water should be available at all times.
- A variety of fleece pouches and nest boxes should be hung on the bars of the cage for your gliders to sleep in. These should be inspected often for holes and loose strings.
- Perches of various materials (wood/plastic) should be placed vertically and horizontally throughout the cage. Anticipate that your sugar glider may try to chew on these perches, therefore, wooden perches should be made of non-toxic woods such as elm, apple, or manzanita.
- Your glider may enjoy running on a wheel. The wheel should be designed specifically for small animals, and have no open treads. We recommend the "Wodent Wheel" ([Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [sugar-glidersonline.com](https://www.sugar-glidersonline.com)).
- Sugar gliders often enjoy playing with simple items such as toilet paper tubes, plastic bird toys, and small plastic balls.



## Common Medical Issues

- Dental Disease
- Malnutrition/Hypocalcemia
- Self-mutilation of painful areas or post-operative sites
- String strangulation of digits, tails, or limbs
- Wounds/fractures from falling or fighting larger animals



## Behavior

In the wild, sugar gliders live in colonies of six to 10 gliders. They are incredibly social animals with complex emotional needs. Ideally, in captivity, they should not be kept as a single pet. Lone gliders have been shown to exhibit symptoms of clinical depression. Even the most attentive and caring owner cannot completely fulfill all of their glider's emotional and mental needs. Contrary to popular belief, having multiple gliders does not destroy the human-glider bond or prevent the glider from becoming a friendly and cuddly pet. Therefore, we recommend sugar gliders are kept in pairs or small groups. If you plan on keeping male and female gliders together it is recommended to neuter the males to prevent reproductive behaviors/pregnancy.

New gliders should be introduced to each other slowly and under close supervision. We recommend providing multiple food stations, toys, and sleeping areas to help ensure that less assertive gliders have access to these basic needs.

Intact (unneutered) male sugar gliders have a frontal scent gland that looks like a bald spot on the top of their heads. They use this and several other scent glands to mark their territory by rubbing themselves on other gliders and things in their cage. Female sugar gliders more commonly mark their territory (and their human friends) with urine.

Gliders make a variety of noises to communicate with each other and their humans. These noises include: barking (to get attention/talk to each other) a soft whistling noise (hard to hear but usually indicates curiosity/contentment), and "crabbing," a harsh, loud, cicada-like noise that scared and upset gliders make as a warning/defense.

## Diet

Your sugar glider's health is dependent on diet. An unbalanced diet that is deficient in calcium, vitamins, and/or minerals can lead to life-threatening illnesses.

There is much debate over the "correct" sugar glider diet/feeding protocol. Unfortunately, there is no standardized diet, however, the following basic dietary principles should be followed:

**Protein:** Should make up approximately 70% of the diet. The best way to achieve this is to feed a high-quality pelleted food. We recommend Suncoast Sugar Glider "Wholesome Balance" pellets and Mazuri® "Insectivore Diet" pellets. Pelleted diets should have a high-quality animal protein source listed as the first ingredient. Most gliders can be transitioned to eating pellets. If they are reluctant at first and refuse to eat the pellets alone, they can be mixed with other sources of lean protein, including hard-boiled egg whites, lean cooked chicken or turkey meat, or plain chicken or turkey baby foods (we recommend Beech-Nut® brand).

**Gums or Nectars:** Should make up to 10-15% of the diet. Sugar gliders are a specialized type of omnivore. This means that in the wild, in addition to eating small arthropods, wild bird eggs, and occasionally other small vertebrates, they also extract saps, gums, nectars, pollens, and honeydew/manna, from tree bark. We recommend Wombaroo's "Wombaroo High Protein Supplement" or Exotic Nutrition® "Gumivore Fare" or "Gliderade."

**Fruits and Vegetables:** The remaining 15% of the diet should include fruits and vegetables. These can include apple, pear, kiwi, orange, berries, melon, grapes, cooked sweet potato, broccoli, green beans, peas, carrots, cauliflower, and bell peppers. These may be offered whole, chopped, or pureed in a blender. You may alternatively offer plain, unsweetened fruit or vegetable baby foods (we recommend Beech-Nut® or Gerber® Naturals brands). We do not recommend offering canned fruits or vegetables since these options are deficient in vitamins and minerals and often have other additives.

### Calcium/Vitamin Supplementation:

We recommend the use of a calcium and vitamin supplement over the food (in the nectar supplement or on top of a favorite fruit works well) at least two to three times each week. We recommend Suncoast Sugar Glider's "Blueberry Fortifier Calcium and Vitamin Supplement."

**Treats:** Healthy treats include a favorite fruit or vegetable, crickets, and/or mealworms (freeze-dried or live). Mealworms or crickets should be offered no more than one to two times each week. "Hunting" live crickets or mealworms can be an enriching activity for your sugar glider. Commercially available "treats" such as yogurt drops or dried fruit should be offered very sparingly, as gliders will eat treats/more sugary foods to the exclusion of other foods. This can lead to malnutrition and obesity.

**Water:** Change water bowl or bottle daily.

