

## **Pygmy Mice**

### **The Smallest Mice in the World**

#### **Description:**

Imagine a mouse so small that it can perch on a quarter with room to spare; so small that it takes around 8 of them just to make an ounce. Weighing in at just a few grams with a body (including tail) of less than four inches, the Pygmy Mouse is the smallest member of the MUS family. Originating from Africa south of the Sahara, it has a brownish coat and a white belly.

#### **Choosing Your New Pet:**

When choosing your new Pygmy Mouse there are a few things that every responsible new owner should know. Unless you plan to breed them, it's very important to get same sex pairs. If you don't, there is no question that you will get babies. Sexing the mice is easy because the males' distinct reproductive organs protrude downward at the base of the tail; whereas, the female doesn't have exposed reproductive organs. If you want the smallest Pygmy Mice, then buy males because they don't get as big as females. There really isn't a difference in temperament between the males and females. Both sexes are really skittish and shy by nature, and since they are too small to handle, it's very hard to change that. The fun comes when you turn the lights down and watch these fascinating animals. They are surprisingly acrobatic, able to jump more than 9 inches straight up.

#### **Housing:**

Pygmy Mice are colony animals and should never be housed alone. Being the promiscuous breeders that they are, it is important to keep same sex pairs unless you want babies. When properly introduced, Pygmy Mice will get along in a colony regardless of sex. The minimum cage size for a pair of Pygmy Mice is a 2.5 gallon aquarium; however, a 5 gallon aquarium is suggested. Figure that for aquariums 5 gallons and larger, you can keep a colony of mice equaling the number of gallons the cage is. When setting up their cage it's important to choose the correct bedding. Aspen is the only type of wood shavings that should be used. The natural oils that occur on cedar shavings can prove harmful or even fatal. Pine shavings are really dusty and can cause respiratory problems. Another more expensive option would be a recycled paper product like Carefresh bedding. It's also important to monitor the temperature. Pygmy mice require that the temperature always be above 60 degrees. Accessories like toilet paper tubes, very small wheels, hamster houses, and anything else that the mice can hide under or climb over are great additions to the cage. Another good idea is a home-built nest box. Commercial nest boxes are just too big. The mice prefer a box 2 inches square by 1.5 inches high. If you plan to breed, you need more than one box. The entrance hole should be no larger than 5/8" in diameter and placed low on the side of the box.

#### **Food:**

Pygmy Mice make up for their size with their huge appetite. They eat a lot so it is vital to keep food in the aquarium at all times. Because the mice are so small, they should be fed a staple diet of canary or finch feed. They also like sunflower seeds. Additional protein can be supplemented with the occasional small meal worm or piece of high-grade cat food such as IAMS.

#### **Water:**

The best way to water Pygmy Mice is with a dish because they just aren't strong enough to drink out of water bottles. Make sure that if the water is more than 1cm deep that rocks are placed in the bottom of it to prevent the mice from drowning. A good idea is to place the dish on top of a small block of wood so as to keep the bedding out of it.