

# Caring For Your New Spiny Mouse

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## **Biography**

Imagine, if you will, a pet store mouse with a longer nose, bigger ears, and no odor. Add to that a spiny fur coat the color of golden French toast. Make its body a bit bigger, and it's temperament a bit better. What you're now picturing is the fascinating Egyptian Spiny Mouse. Found across Northern Africa, parts of the Middle East, and Southern Europe, the Spiny Mouse spends its nights traversing the rocky terrain it calls home. Living in such a hot climate, the spiny coat of the Spiny Mouse works to dissipate the heat and thus regulate the mouse's body temperature. This same adaptation mandates higher cage temperatures in captivity as even 60 degrees Fahrenheit can be dangerous for extended periods. By nature friendly and docile, we at TCFexotics consider these beautiful animals to be the high class of mouse society.

## **Choosing**

When it comes time to choose your new Spiny Mouse, it's important to ensure that it's happy and healthy. The eyes should be bright, the ears and tail free of bite marks, and the coat shouldn't look oily or greasy. As Spiny Mice are still pretty new to the pet world there isn't a lot known about them yet. Some breeders have successfully housed lone Spiny Mice but since they're colony animals in the wild, here at TCFexotics we treat them that way. Here we advise that they be kept as pairs or colonies. Sex doesn't seem to affect how well Spiny Mice get along, but unless you're prepared for a houseful of babies we'd suggest you stay with same sex groups. One breeding pair produces up to 65 babies per year. Temperament between the sexes should be indistinguishable except when breeding at which time Mommy Mouse will defend her babies while they're in the nest. In the end, no matter what Spiny Mouse you choose you can't go wrong. We'd have to rate them one of the most underappreciated animals in the pet market today.

## **Housing**

Being fairly small rodents, a 10 gallon aquarium is large enough to house a pair of Spiny Mice. It's important that Spiny Mice don't feel overcrowded because crammed Spiny Mice will fight amongst themselves. We strongly urge you not to use any type of plastic Habitrail type cage because of all the animals we keep here at TCFexotics, Spiny Mice are the best escape artists. Even with an aquarium you must ensure that the screen lid is the stronger all-metal version and not the cheaper plastic version found in most super stores. You may think it's overkill, but trust us, these little Houdinis are magic! Inside the aquarium there needs to be a chew-proof water bottle or dish, a metal or ceramic food dish, and about 2" of bedding. We use and recommend Aspen shavings and other recycled newspaper based beddings. Softwood shavings like Pine and Cedar have reportedly caused a large percentage of illness among other rodents. Other good additions would be a nest box, a wheel, and stuff to chew on like toilet paper rolls or sticks from non-toxic trees.

## **Food and Water**

There are two kinds of people; those who eat cake and with no ill effects, and those who eat cake and gain 5 pounds. Spiny Mice relate closely to the second group. Very prone to obesity, it's important to regulate the fat content in their food. Too much fatty food and your Spiny Mouse will start looking like a furry grease-ball. It also leads to diabetes. Sunflower seeds, for instance, should not be part of the staple diet but can instead be used as an occasional treat. In the wild Spiny Mice are omnivores which means they eat both plants and meat. To satisfy their specialized diet, we feed a base of hamster/gerbil mix (minus the sunflower seeds) supplemented with rodent block and high quality "senior" or "weight loss" formula dog food. The "senior" and "weight loss" formulas are high in protein but tend to be lower in fat. Spiny Mice also love crickets, which can be given as the weekend entertainment for the family as you watch the mice go into hunter mode.

Fresh water should be available at all times. Spiny Mice may not drink much, but it's still important that their water be changed at least every other day. We warned you once before and we'll do it again. If you use a water bottle don't have a full metal guard for it the mice will make short work of chewing it up. That's why another good idea is a crockery water dish which can be set on top of a clock of wood to keep the bedding out of it.