

Sugar Glider

(*Petaurus breviceps*)



Natural history

The sugar glider is native to northern and eastern Australia, New Guinea, and surrounding islands. This arboreal nocturnal creature spends its days in leaf-lined nests in tree hollows. Sugar gliders are extremely social and vocal.

Taxonomy

Class Mammalia
Interclass Marsupialia
Order Diprotodontia (kangaroo, wallaby, koala, wombat)
Family Petauridae (possum species)

Diet	<p>Free-ranging gliders feed on insects, larvae, arachnids, and small vertebrates during the spring and summer. Plant products such as sap, blossoms, and nectar make up the bulk of the diet during the autumn and the winter wet season. There are a number of captive diets recommended for gliders. The commonly recommended diet listed below comes from the Taronga Zoo. The following recipe feeds two animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apple (3 g)• Banana/corn (3 g)• Grapes/kiwi (3 g)• Pear (2 g)• Melon (2 g)• Orange with skin (4 g)• Sweet potato (3 g)• Dog kibble (1.5 g)• Fly pupae (1 tsp) <p>Leadbeater's mixture (2 tsp) Day-old chick, when available (once weekly)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large insects, mealworms once weekly• Leadbeater's Mix:• 150 ml warm water• 150 ml honey• 1 shelled boiled egg• 25g high protein baby cereal• 1 tsp vitamin/mineral supplement• 100mg calcium carbonate <p>Mix water and honey. In a separate container, blend egg until homogenized, then gradually add vitamin/mineral powder, then baby cereal, blending after each addition until smooth. Keep refrigerated. The mixture can be frozen in ice cube trays.</p>
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Husbandry	<p>Sugar gliders are social animals that normally live in groups of five to twelve. These groups are exclusive and territorial, and introduced gliders may be attacked.</p> <p>Solitary gliders require at least 1-2 hours of human attention daily. Provide as large a cage as possible like a tall aviary wire cage. Wire spacing should be no more than 1.0 x 0.5 in (2.5 x 1.3 cm). Cage furniture should include items for visual security (i.e. hide box, sleeping pouch) as well as exercise and enrichment (i.e. branches, shelves, solid running wheel, swings, and bird toys). Provide supplemental heat during the winter months.</p>																																			
Normal physiologic values	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 533 776 575">Cloacal Temperature</td> <td data-bbox="784 533 1076 575">89.6°F</td> <td data-bbox="1084 533 1367 575">32°C</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 585 776 627">Pulse</td> <td data-bbox="784 585 1076 627">200-300 bpm</td> <td data-bbox="1084 585 1367 627"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 638 776 680">Respiration</td> <td data-bbox="784 638 1076 680">16-40 bpm</td> <td data-bbox="1084 638 1367 680"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 690 776 753">Body weight</td> <td data-bbox="784 690 1076 753">80-160g (the female is smaller)</td> <td data-bbox="1084 690 1367 753"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 764 776 806">Mean life span</td> <td data-bbox="784 764 1076 806">12-14y in captivity</td> <td data-bbox="1084 764 1367 806">4-5y (in the wild)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 816 776 890">Sexual maturity</td> <td data-bbox="784 816 1076 890">females (8-12 mo) males (12-14 mo)</td> <td data-bbox="1084 816 1367 890"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 900 776 974">Gestation</td> <td data-bbox="784 900 1076 974">15-17 days (young stay in the pouch 70-74d)</td> <td data-bbox="1084 900 1367 974"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 984 776 1026">Birth weight</td> <td data-bbox="784 984 1076 1026">30-50 grams</td> <td data-bbox="1084 984 1367 1026"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 1037 776 1079">Litter size</td> <td data-bbox="784 1037 1076 1079">1-2 (usually 2)</td> <td data-bbox="1084 1037 1367 1079"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 1089 776 1131">Weaning age</td> <td data-bbox="784 1089 1076 1131">110-120 days</td> <td data-bbox="1084 1089 1367 1131"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 1142 776 1215">Target environmental temperature:</td> <td data-bbox="784 1142 1076 1215">65-90°F or 18.3-32.2°C</td> <td data-bbox="1084 1142 1367 1215"></td> </tr> </table>			Cloacal Temperature	89.6°F	32°C	Pulse	200-300 bpm		Respiration	16-40 bpm		Body weight	80-160g (the female is smaller)		Mean life span	12-14y in captivity	4-5y (in the wild)	Sexual maturity	females (8-12 mo) males (12-14 mo)		Gestation	15-17 days (young stay in the pouch 70-74d)		Birth weight	30-50 grams		Litter size	1-2 (usually 2)		Weaning age	110-120 days		Target environmental temperature:	65-90°F or 18.3-32.2°C	
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Anatomy / physiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gliders possess a large gliding membrane (patagium) which extends from the 5th digit of the forepaws to the ankles. • The tail is weakly prehensile and it also serves as a rudder during gliding. • Dental formula: I (3/2) C (1/0) PM (3/3) M (4/4) = 40 • The incisors are specialized for gouging tree bark. • An enlarged cecum assists in digesting gum from the acacia tree. • The bifurcated penis splits about halfway down the protrusion. • Testicles are permanently descended into pendulous, pre-penile scrotal sacs. • Males possess large prostate and Cowper's glands. • Females have two uteri and two long, thin lateral vaginae • Females are polyestrous, cycling every 29 days. • Scent glands: male (frontal, sternal, paracloacal) female (within pouch) • Gliders may enter torpor during the winter; torpor may last up to 16h/day. 																																			
Restraint	<p>Options for restraint of the sugar glider includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasp the head between the thumb and middle finger. 																																			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scruff • Restrain through a small cotton bag or pouch • Inhalant anesthesia
Venipuncture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger volumes: Jugular vein, cranial vena cava +/- tibial artery • Smaller volumes: Lateral saphenous, lateral coccygeal, cephalic, and femoral veins
Preventive medicine	Annual physical examination Dental prophylaxis as needed
Important medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alopecia, stress-related • Bacterial enteritis • Cataracts • Cloacal or rectal prolapse • Dental disease • Encephalomalacia, hypovitaminosis E • Malnutrition • Nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism • Obesity • Self-mutilation of the penis and scrotum • Traumatic injury • Urinary tract infection, urolithiasis

References

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Date: July 12, 2009

To cite this page: Pollock C. Basic information sheet: Sugar Glider. LafeberVet website.

Feb 14, 2010. Available at: <http://www.lafebervet.com/small-mammal-medicine/sugar-glider/basic-information-sheet-6/>