

## HANDLING

Not all chipmunks respond well to handling and may bite. With patience, chipmunks may become hand tame once they overcome any shyness and fear. Never pick up a chipmunk by its tail.

## SHOPPING LIST

- Cage or aviary
- Water bottle and brush
- Wooden chew toys
- Food
- Nest
- Ceramic or metal food bowls
- Vitamin drops
- Mineral stone
- A solid exercise wheel
- Perches, tubes and other toys
- Chipmunk care book



The Animal Welfare Act 2006 means all pet owners have a legal duty of care to their pets. Anyone who is cruel to an animal or is found not to be providing the five animal welfare needs, as listed below, can be fined and sent to prison.

### The Five Animal Welfare needs:

1. **Environment:** Pets should be given the correct housing according to its size, this includes shelter, space to exercise and a secure, comfortable place to rest.
2. **Diet:** Pets should be offered the correct type and volume of food to cover all their nutritional needs alongside access to clean, fresh water.
3. **Behaviour:** All pets should be allowed to exhibit normal behaviour patterns and should be provided with the facilities to do so.
4. **Company:** Some animals require the company of their own kind, whilst others should be kept on their own.
5. **Health:** All animals should be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease, and given veterinary treatment if they become sick or injured.



### Remember - you should never release your pet into the wild.

This leaflet is produced by The Pet Charity, a national charity which promotes the joy and benefits of pet ownership.

Copyright © 2014 The Pet Charity. All Rights Reserved.

**The Pet Charity** [www.thepetcharity.org.uk](http://www.thepetcharity.org.uk)

Registered Charity No: 1052488

To show your support for The Pet Charity please text TPTC30 and the amount in pounds you wish to donate to 70070.



The British Veterinary Zoological Society supports the aims of The Pet Charity to secure and enhance the welfare of pet animals. For more information visit [www.bvzs.org](http://www.bvzs.org)



This leaflet is supported by the

PET INDUSTRY FEDERATION



# GUIDE TO CARING FOR CHIPMUNKS

the  
**pet**  
**charity**  
*For joy, health & companionship*



Chipmunks are highly active, curious animals that need spacious and stimulating housing.

Chipmunks are part of the squirrel family but are smaller with a striped back. In the wild they are found in North America and have become popular pets in the UK.

# THE PET CHARITY GUIDE TO CARING FOR CHIPMUNKS

Chipmunks are naturally ground-dwelling animals but they're excellent climbers and will spend considerable amounts of time foraging in shrubs and small trees in the wild. Males tend to have a shorter lifespan than females, and typically live for around five years, but they can live up to eight years or longer if provided with the right care. Given patience, chipmunks can become hand tame, but can resent handling.

Chipmunks can be kept on their own, but as they are social animals and enjoy each other's company The Pet Charity recommends keeping a pair or more. Males may fight, so a pair of females usually work best.

## GENERAL CARE

By far the most important aspect of chipmunk care is to avoid boredom. This can be achieved using a combination of several methods. Rearranging cage contents regularly is useful as is providing toys. Wooden toys are ideal as are the plastic ones used in conjunction with food or treats.

Since chipmunks spend much of their time in the wild foraging, fresh food and treats should be placed or hidden in different parts of the enclosure, so that the animals have to search for it. A box containing peat or shavings encourages digging, allowing for natural behaviour.

Without adequate stimulation chipmunks can suffer from abnormal behaviour patterns. You should look out for repetitive behaviour like running backwards and forwards along the same route for long periods of time.

Given a good routine and varied diet chipmunks normally lead healthy, problem-free lives. As with all rodents, their front teeth grow continuously and need to be kept worn down. If your chipmunk's teeth get too long or you notice any other signs of ill health you should consult your vet. It is recommended to find a vet with chipmunk experience.

## CHOOSING YOUR CHIPMUNKS

Chipmunks should be at least 10 weeks old before you can take them home. You may wish to assess how friendly the chipmunks are before you decide to purchase.

A healthy chipmunk should be:

- Bright, alert and inquisitive.**
- Have no signs of discharge from eye, ears, mouth and nose.**
- Have a clean anal area.**
- Have a glossy coat with no bald patches and not have sores on the skin.**



## DID YOU KNOW?

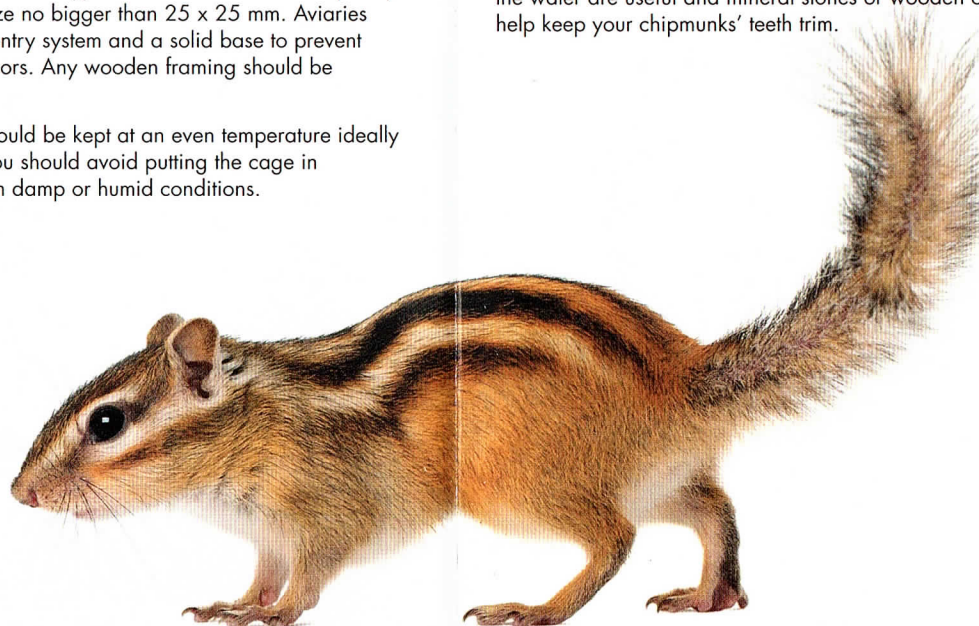
Chipmunks get bored easily, so their cage must be made as interesting and stimulating as possible.

- Should move around the cage easily.**
- Shouldn't feel too skinny or bony.**

## HOUSING

Chipmunks are very active and energetic and therefore a large cage is essential. There are several types of housing designed for chipmunks but aviaries are preferable. Whichever type is chosen it must be completely escape-proof with a mesh size no bigger than 25 x 25 mm. Aviaries should have a double-door entry system and a solid base to prevent vermin entering if kept outdoors. Any wooden framing should be similarly protected.

If kept indoors chipmunks should be kept at an even temperature ideally between 16°C and 22°C. You should avoid putting the cage in draughts, direct sunlight or in damp or humid conditions.



A chipmunk enclosure must be furnished with an interesting selection of natural, non-toxic wood branches, shelves, pipes and perches. Chipmunks can become bored easily, so it is worth buying a selection of toys and rotating them and moving the cage contents regularly. Your chipmunks will also appreciate a solid exercise wheel.

One or more nest boxes should be provided with an entrance hole of 50 to 65 mm diameter. Your pet shop will be able to advise you on a suitable nest box for your accommodation.

Chipmunks will hoard food so boxes should be checked regularly and uneaten fresh food removed. A soft paper bedding or hay should be provided. Outdoor aviaries should have an area that is protected from inclement weather.

Smaller cages will need to be cleaned and disinfected on a regular weekly basis as will any perches, branches or other decorations.

## FOOD AND WATER

There are several diets available that are formulated for chipmunks and your pet shop can advise. Formulated food typically comprises of a mixture of cereals, nuts and dried fruit.

Fresh foods are essential to provide a healthy and varied diet for your chipmunks. Hard fruit and vegetables like apples, broccoli, carrots and cauliflower are suitable and a small quantity should be offered daily. Peanuts are a firm favourite with chipmunks, but be very careful not to overfeed.

Fresh clean water must be available at all times and is best provided by a gravity-fed bottle. Vitamin drops that are added to the water are useful and mineral stones or wooden chew toys will help keep your chipmunks' teeth trim.