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The sugar glider (*Petarus breviceps*) is a small marsupial originating from Australia, New Guinea and the surrounding islands. They are nocturnal animals mainly found living in forest regions, and are able to glide up to 50m between trees. They are increasingly common pets and can live between 12-14 years if looked after correctly.

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Sugar gliders are very active, playful, intelligent, and inquisitive animals. They can develop strong bonds with their owners if given consistent and plentiful attention. At least 2 hours a day of interactive contact is recommended. Shorter or less frequent attention to a sugar glider that is a lone pet could result in the animal being depressed and could possibly lead to behavioural problems. Enrichment, such as puzzles and toys, should be provided to encourage natural behaviours and reduce boredom. When choosing toys ensure they are safe and non-toxic.

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Sugar gliders should be housed inside in a spacious tall aviary-type wire cage (minimum size 2 x 2 x 2m) with small mesh.

The cage should contain a variety of nest boxes, branches, perches and shelves. Bird toys and swings may also be enjoyed.

Temperatures should be maintained between 24-27°C for these tropical animals, and the cage should be placed out of direct sunlight to avoid extremes of temperature.

Supervised exercise within a confined area in the house is encouraged, but it is important to prevent access to anything that could be chewed, eaten or destroyed.

The enclosure should be cleaned out at least once a week to help prevent disease.

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Sugar gliders are social animals, so will be happiest in a pair or small group. Entire males may fight but neutering will often help reduce this problem.

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Choosing the correct diet for your sugar glider can be difficult as diet is one of the most contentious topics in sugar glider keeping.

However, by looking at a sugar glider's diet in the wild we can see that the majority of it is composed of a variety of insects, eggs, tree sap and nectar, and NOT fruit or vegetables.

It is therefore recommended in captivity for their diet to be made up of 50-60% insects or a commercial insectivorous food (such as that designed for pet hedgehogs), and 40-50% mixed vegetables with only a small amount of fruit and acacia gum

Vitamin and mineral supplementation should be applied to any fruit or insects given

Clean water must be given daily either in a water bottle or bowl.

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Male sugar gliders may be castrated in order to reduce fighting, or prevent reproduction

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We recommend annual health checks every year for pet sugar gliders as medical problems are more easily treated if detected at an early stage

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We highly recommend that you take out a pet insurance policy. For a monthly fee your pet can receive the best treatment at an affordable cost. There is normally an excess to pay for each condition then after that costs are covered up to a set limit. Once you have the policy, please provide us with a copy of your insurance details. There are a lot of different companies and policies available and we suggest you contact a number of them for information- we have a leaflet advising what to look out for. Our advice is to choose a policy which provides cover for chronic illness for the life of your pet. If this policy is too much for you then the best cover you can afford will provide piece of mind in an accident or emergency.

