

# Gerbilmania

## Shawsheen River Gerbils

May, 2005

Issue 4

## When to See the Vet

Have you ever wondered whether your gerbil is sick enough to visit the vet? Sometimes, gerbils can be treated without a trip to the vet. Other times, the vet could save your gerbil's life.

One sign that you definitely need to get your gerbil to the vet right away is diarrhea. This can be a symptom of other diseases, such as Tyzzer's. Another thing is that gerbils with diarrhea can get dehydrated very rapidly. Because gerbils are so small, this can be dangerous. One thing to remember before you freak is that if your gerbil gets lots of veggies that could be the cause.

Another dangerous thing are scent gland tumors. The scent gland is a bare spot on a gerbil's belly. If your gerbil has a hard

lump on its scent gland, that's probably a scent gland tumor. You should take your gerbil to a vet quickly, so the tumor doesn't get too much bigger. Vets can usually operate on them.

Mites are annoying bugs (like fleas) that a vet can give you medicine for. There's a whole article about them on page 3.

Respiratory infections occur most often in pups at the weaning age. Symptoms are clicking noises. You can treat respiratory infections using Ornycyclyne or you can get specific medicine from a vet.

Tyzzer's is every gerbil owner's nightmare. It is a highly contagious disease. Gerbils who get it usually die very quickly. Some symptoms are diarrhea. Tyzzer's



Take your gerbils to the vet in their tank or a plastic carrier, not a cardboard box.

is that it can lie dormant in a gerbil for years. Anything could stimulate it to suddenly infect your gerbil.

Hopefully, this article will help you figure out if your gerbil is sick and whether to see the vet. Remember, better safe than sorry! If you're not sure if your gerbil is sick, take him to the vet.

## Keep Chewing!!!

And they're off! Gerbil chewing races are the newest craze in sports right now. A standard size toilet paper tube is set in the tank and the gerbils are timed to see how long it takes them to chew the entire tube. In a single-gerbil chew, a Dixie cup is used. Any remaining pieces are removed and examined by the

judges. There can be one remainder per gerbil, each no bigger than a half dollar coin. Nonstop coverage is provided with frequent time checks. The gerbils are categorized into three groups, three-gerbil chews, two-gerbil chews, and one-gerbil chews. The average time is about 10 minutes. The most recent



competition is underway right here at SRG Gerbils. The top scorers so far in the three-gerbil chew are Flutterbye Cocoa, (cont on page 3)

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## Welcome to Gerbilmania!

This newsletter is dedicated to the Mongolian gerbil, *Meriones unguiculatus*. These small, friendly, furry pets are not as well known as the more common hamsters and guinea pigs, but they deserve more attention! This newsletter will help you learn all about these wonderful pets and perhaps persuade you to give gerbils a try in your own home, classroom or workplace. Read on!

# Gerbil Autobiographies

## Today's Feature: Princess Liz Bear

Hello, I'm Princess Liz Bear. I'm a sweet Siamese gerbil. I was born in early 2004 at ABC Gerbils in New Hampshire. When I was about 4 months old, I came to SRG Gerbils to have pups there.

When I arrived at SRG, I was put in a split-cage with my to-be-husband Buzz. We got along from the very start. Buzz was very nice, and soon I had my first litter of pups.

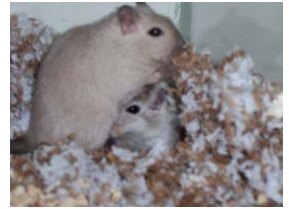
I became the second breeding pair at SRG, and my children soon had homes

all over Bedford. I could have many of the gerbil colors. After my second litter, SRG Gerbils decided that I should retire soon because I was looking tired. I was supposed to have another litter, but never had it. They sent Buzz and some of my pups up to ABC Gerbils. Buzz (surprisingly) had a litter with my daughter, Chloe. Recently, I went to the gerbil show in Rutland, VT. I came home with a blue ribbon!

Now I live with my daughter Tikki. We

spend almost all our time in our coconut. When we come out, my favorite activity is leaping over the side of my run.

I hope you have learned a bit more about me. You can come and see me any time.



Princess Liz Bear (left) with her spotted agouti daughter, Tikki.

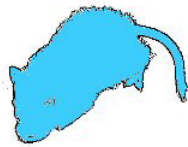
## Feeling Blue?

What's the newest craze color in gerbils? Blue! This cool color has the genetics aaC\*dd (this gene is used in other countries, it means dilution) E\*G\*P\*.

The gene 'dd' is a new combination. It causes extreme dilution. 'dd' hadn't been bred before. The gene 'dd' had been in other rodent species before, but it is new to gerbils. The blue color was discovered 1998 at the Osnabrueck University in

Germany.

A blue gerbil has a metallic bluish color.



This is a creation of ours. We couldn't find a real picture.

The whole body is the same color. Also, the toenails, and eyes are black too, although the eyes are a bit duller.

I hope you have

**"The gene 'dd' has been bred in other rodent species before, but it is new to gerbils."**

learned something about blue gerbils. Who knows, someday maybe pet stores everywhere will carry blue gerbils!

## Dear Charlie and Sam

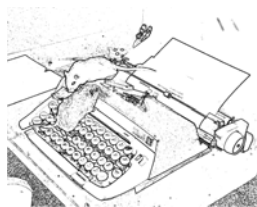
Dear Charlie and Sam,

My friend says that I make a clicking noise. What is the clicking? Is there something wrong with me?

*Clicker*

Dear Clicker,

You have a respiratory infection. This can



be caused by the wrong kind of bedding. If you are on Pine or Cedar Bedding, you should definitely tell your humans to buy a new kind, like Aspen, Corncob, or Care-fresh. Also, pups can easily catch respiratory infections. If you are a pup and you have a respiratory infection, you should tell your human to put Ornycline ( pur-

chased in the bird aisle) in your water. If you want more specific medicine, see your vet.

Try to get your humans to get you cured soon, because respiratory infections can be dangerous, especially to pups.

Good Luck,  
Charlie and Sam

## Mites

Have you seen little red bugs crawling around your gerbil's tank? If so, your gerbil might have mites.

Mites are pesky little creatures that live on gerbils. You can tell if your gerbil has mites if you see the mites, or if your gerbil is itching more than usual. To test if your gerbil has mites, rub them with a Kleenex. If you see moving dust flecks or red blobs, your gerbil might have mites.

To cure mites, buy a bottle of mite spray from a pet store or get one from your vet. Then, spray **everything** in the tank with mite

spray: the bedding, the outside of the water bottle, and any toys your gerbil has. Also, spray your gerbil with it, except for the head. Next, spray your hands with it and rub your gerbils head with your hands. Now, wash the tank with bleach water. It also might be a good idea to switch to a new brand of food because that could be where the mites came from. Then, do the Kleenex test again to see if your gerbils still have it. If they test positive, keep spraying. If not, you have probably gotten rid of the mites.

Mites are not only annoying and uncomfort-

able but they can cause diseases. One such disease Demodectic Mange. Also, mites can cause scabs and eczema on your gerbils skin. Mites can also host worms.

Mites aren't nice things to have in your clan, but they can be prevented. Make sure to purchase healthy looking gerbils from a breeder or reliable pet store. Buy good quality food and bedding in a sealed plastic bag. This way, if there are mites in the food or bedding, they die because there is no air.

Hopefully, you will never experience mites. If you do, I wish you luck!

## Keep Chewing!!! (cont)

Grasshopper Buttercup, and Crystal Sparkle with 9 minutes, 1 second. These gerbils are Mrs. Davies classroom gerbils and came home for April Vacation Week. Flutterbye Cocoa is the captain of this team, although Crystal Sparkle showed much endurance. Currently in second place is Moonda, Tammy, and Dandy, they're time being 10 minutes and 36 seconds. Dandy is the leader of this team, and chewed almost the whole time. There has been two gerbils in the two-gerbil chew. Leading are Chichi and Chrisso. These are the Heckman's gerbils. Their

time is 5 minutes 45 seconds. Also, Charlie and Sam competed. These big males had a time of 11 minutes and 12 seconds. Also, Tuna and Gemma entered the chew but rejected the tube. They will try again another day. In the single-gerbil chew, Johnny D. chewed a great chew but was disqualified for leaving a too much of a

remainder. He will try again another day.

You can time your gerbils and we'll print their scores. Just remember to follow the official rules. (See our site, [www.hannas.com](http://www.hannas.com) for more info).

**"In the single-gerbil chew, Johnny D. chewed a great chew but was disqualified for leaving too much of a remainder."**

## Focus On Color: The Sp Gene The Second in a Series of Six Articles on Genetics

There are six genes that control the gerbils color, A, C, E, G, P, and Sp. Gerbil genetics are very fun and really very simple when you figure them out.

The Sp gene controls whether or not the gerbil has spots. If your gerbil has spots, it has SpSp. If your



Pumpkin, left, has spsp, while Thunderbolt, right, has SpSp.

gerbil has spsp, it doesn't have spots. This is the one of the simplest of all of the genes.

Gerbils with SpSp die in the womb. You would think that this would cause two parents who both have spots to have smaller litters. Curiously, this is not true. You

can prove this theory because to spotted gerbils bred together never produce only spotted gerbils, which would happen if this theory was false.

Now you know a bit more about gerbil genetics. You can figure out your gerbils genetics!

**Shawsheen River Gerbils**

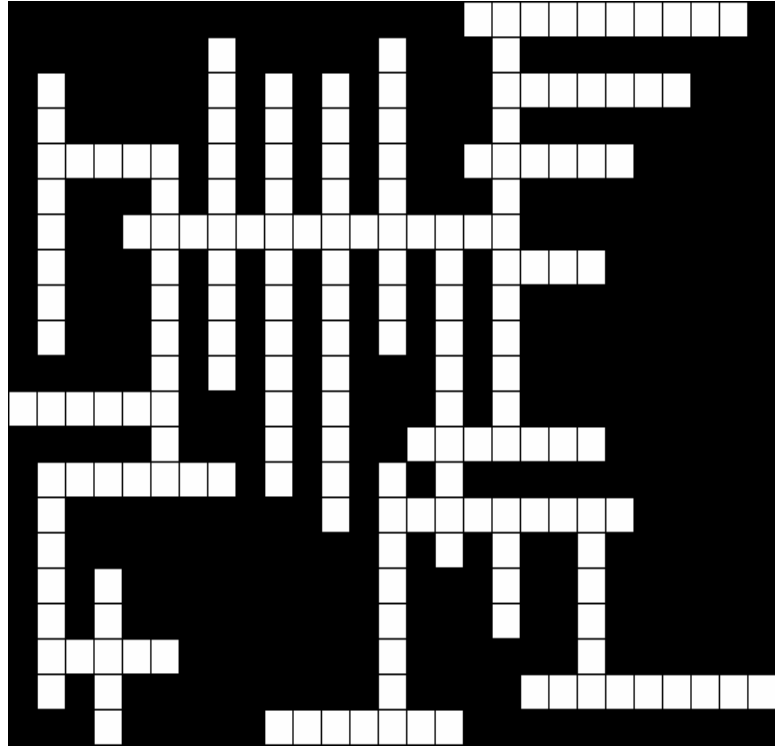
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<b>4 Letters</b>	BLACK	AGOUTI	ARGENTE
	DOVE	NUTMEG	BURMESE
	PIED	REDFOX	MOTTLED
<b>5 Letters</b>	<b>6 Letters</b>	<b>7 Letters</b>	SIAMESE
			SPOTTED
			<b>8 Letters</b>
			POLARFOX
			SCHIMMEL
			<b>9 Letters</b>
			CHAMPAGNE
			LIGHTENED
			YELLOWFOX
			<b>10 Letters</b>
			COLORPOINT
			GRAYAGOUTI
			HONEYCREAM
			IVORYCREAM
			<b>12 Letters</b>
			SILVERNUTMEG
			<b>13 Letters</b>
			DARKEYEDHONEY
			RUBYEYEDWHITE
			<b>14 Letters</b>
			BLACKEYEDWHITE



## Gerbils In the Wild

Your sweet gerbil friends live in your tank, but do you know where their ancestors came from? Gerbils live in the wild of Mongolia. Some of their instinctive behaviors can still be observed in your gerbils.

### *Habitat*

Mongolia is part of the Gobi Desert. The temperature there reaches extremes: -40 F in the winter and 122 F in the summer. There is thinly spread grass and occasional shrubs.

### *Food*

Gerbils in the wild were observed eating Bristle Grass. Bristle Grass is the same thing as millet. Millet is sold in the bird aisle in pet stores. If you give your gerbils millet, they will devour it. Also, gerbils in the wild eat seeds. They probably eat roots

and invertebrates too, but this was seen from a distance and is not positive.

### *Predators*

One predator of gerbils in the wild is the Eagle Owl. The Eagle Owl's owl pellets were dissected and contained only gerbil remains. The Eagle Owl was obviously a major predator. Also, weasels, foxes, wolves and dogs are a threat to gerbils in the wild.

### *Population*

Gerbils relied on their sources of food, so if there was a lot of food, there was a lot of gerbils and vice-versa. Scientists in Mongolia caught 126 gerbils, and of the 126 there were 19% juvenile, 54% sub-adult, and only 27% adult. Of the adults, only 4% were over 8

months. Males dominated; 48% of the juveniles was male, 58% of sub-adults was male, and 68% of the adults was male.

In conclusion, gerbils in the wild are much alike to tamed gerbils. They have many of the same habits. If you watch carefully, you may be able to see them in your gerbils!



Gerbils in the wild. (C) Copyright Guenther Eichhorn ([gei@cfa.harvard.edu](mailto:gei@cfa.harvard.edu))