

# Handling a Gerbil



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## Equipment list: Handling a Gerbil

Equipment for this station:

- Model rodent



Considerations for this station:

- Gerbil handling video available on the AHWLA website. Click on 'Tutorials' and then 'Practical Animal Handling' or scan QR code above.

Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



# Clinical Skills: Handling a Gerbil

1



Gerbils are active social animals which prefer to live in groups and can be nervous and difficult to handle. If kept in an aquarium with ample bedding they can be difficult to catch.

Approach the cage or tank slowly making no sudden movements or loud noises so not to cause the gerbils to become stressed; then remove the gerbil from its tank or cage by scooping it out with cupped hands.

2



Gerbils, unlike mice and rats should not be handled by their tail as it can easily be damaged and become stripped causing a nasty injury. Once removed from the cage the gerbil can be restrained by scruffing the neck with one hand and supporting the body with the other. This restraint method can be used to examine the genitals.

3



The second method to sex gerbils is by palming which involves cupping the animal in your hands and then placing it on one hand facing towards you covering it with your other hand and then turning the animal upside down and parting your fingers to expose the genital area. This is **a female gerbil** – the anogenital distance is small.

4



This is **a male gerbil** – the anogenital distance is larger.

Notice the increased anal-genital distance and the testicles in the scrotum.

Adult males also have a larger ventral scent gland than females.



Practise the technique described on the model rodent.



- Male : Boar
- Female : Sow
- Young : Cub
- Oestrus : every 4-7 days and lasts 12-18 hours (first oestrus at 10 weeks). Polyoestrous; spontaneous ovulators . Post partum oestrus (approx 24 hours after parturition).
- Gestation : 23-26 days
- Birth weight : 2.5-3.5g on average
- Size of litter : 3 – 8 on average
- Stage of development at birth : Blind and hairless at birth
- Eyes open : 8-12 days
- Weaning age : 21-24 days
- Breeding Age : 9 – 12 weeks
- Adult weight : 70-130g
- Breeding life of female : 15 months
- Breeding life of male : 20 months
- Life expectancy : 1.5-2.5 years on average
- NB A female may become pregnant post partum, and if so lactation may delay birth for up to 21 days
- Rectal temperature: 38 °C
- Heart rate: 260 - 600 beats per min
- Respiratory rate: 70 - 120 breaths per min