

Gerbil Is Afraid Of Hands

How can a gerbil overcome a fear of hands?

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Q: I have had a gerbil for about two weeks now, and he's still afraid of my hand. What should I do to not make him afraid?

A: Gerbils do best in pairs. Often gerbils kept alone are skittish. Gerbils need a friend for companionship, to sleep with, to groom and to thump a warning. You may want to get a second gerbil (males tend to like gerbil pups).

The American Gerbil Society website has a care handbook that discusses how to introduce gerbils by housing them in a tank split down the middle with sturdy mesh wire. House one gerbil on each side and swap them frequently.

If you get a very outgoing second gerbil, usually from a breeder, and ignore the other gerbil, your fearful gerbil is likely to start following the youngster onto your hand and up your arm.

Another idea for taming gerbils involves taking everything out of the tank and resting your hand and arm in it for your gerbil to explore. Keep your arm very still. Do this for a half-hour at a time, while watching TV works well.

Also, every time you give your gerbil a good thing, like food or cardboard, let your hand linger in the tank so that your gerbil associates your hand with good things.

Finally, when you take your gerbil out of the tank, use a box for him to climb into or herd him into the corner with two hands and scoop. Don't grab your gerbil from above. And never hold a gerbil by the tail — they hate it, and a gerbil's tail is built to detach in the middle and won't grow back.

Good luck with taming your gerbil!

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