



Degu

Octodon degus



What is the history of my relationship to man?

In Chile where I am originally from I am considered an agricultural pest. I am relatively unknown in Britain, but in the USA and many European countries I am kept as a pet. I was also used in laboratory experiments on diabetes in the 1950's because of my inability to process sugar.

Habitat / Climate

Dry grassy and rocky areas

Where am I from?

I am from the lowland areas of Chile. We live in relatively open areas near thickets, rocks or stone walls. We build extensive tunnel systems with multiple entrances.



Who are my relatives?

I am a mammal from the order *Rodentia* and the family *Octodontidae*. Even though I look somewhat like a Gerbil we are not in the same family. I am more closely related to the Chinchilla and the Guinea Pig. My Latin name *Octodon degus* is derived from the worn enamel surface of my teeth which forms a pattern

Other family members:

Chinchilla, guinea pig



Breeding Potential

Average is 6 to a litter

How am I born?

I am born fully furred and with my eyes open. Litters usually contain four to seven pups, but size can range from one or two up to fifteen young. Degu pups are born relatively precocial, fully furred and with eyes open, We remain in the nest for the first few days until we go out on our own. I am weaned at about 5 weeks old. Gestation is approximately ninety days, a long time compared to other rodents such as hamsters.

Breeding Season

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC

How long does it take me to grow up and how long do I live?

I could have babies when I am as young as six weeks old but should wait until I am 6 months old when I am more mature. I will live to be about 5 years old.

What kind of family life do I have?

We are very social animals and very active. My family will form into clans of 5-10 adults. A pair of Degu will mate for life and both parents help to care for the young. The dominant males will pile up earth and other debris into a mound near the entrance to the burrow and rest near these mounds. After fighting off animals from a neighboring territory he will add more to his mound. If his mound should be destroyed the male loses status.

Names for:

Adult male-male
Adult female-female
Young-Pup
Group:-Clan

What do I eat and when do I eat?

I am a herbivore. In the wild I eat grasses, leaves, bark herbs, seeds and any bulbs and tubers I find. I can not metabolize sugar and that includes the natural sugars that are found in fruit. If fed anything containing sugar I can become diabetic. I am Diurnal.

Who are my predators?

Any carnivore larger than I am. If something grabs me by the tail it will come off and allow me to escape. It will heal but never grow back.



Comments:

You should make sure the Degu never get sugary foods like fruit