

Accommodation of Small Mammals

Student's Notes

Content

This unit provides a basic understanding of the housing requirements for common small mammals.

The physical requirements (physiology) and mental requirements (psychology) are linked to the animal's natural behaviour and environment.

To get the most out of this session you could read the 'questions to answer' section, that goes with the film clip you are about to watch. Then use the film clip to help you get the answers, and before moving on to the next clip, complete the 'Tasks to do'.

The Aim of this session is . . .

To demonstrate the options for small mammal accommodation.

Objectives - By the end of this session you will be able to:

- Identify advantages and disadvantages of different types of housing.
- Establish which would be most suitable for various species.
- Establish which would best meet the needs of various animals.
- Give a recommendation as to which accommodation would best meet the animal's needs.
- Justify your opinions.



Introduction

Film Clip	Questions to answer (whilst watching)	Tasks to do (after watching)
Watch the film clip: Animal Physiology	Why must we consider an animal's physiology? What types of Pathogens and Vermin pose a threat? What range of equipment can be used to clean an enclosure? What cleaning agent(s) are commonly used (and why)?	Research what disease causing agents are most relevant to different species. Inspect an existing establishment, and identify any risk areas/factors. Form a plan that will ensure vermin is kept to a minimum, and decide how infection from external sources can be reduced.



<p>Watch the film clip: Animal Psychology_1</p>	<p>Why is mental health important?</p> <p>What psychological state will an inappropriate environment lead to?</p> <p>What sorts of behaviour will stress cause?</p> <p>What is the link between stress and an animal's natural environment and natural behaviour?</p>	<p>Explain what 'Environmental Enrichment' means.</p> <p>Research some symptoms of stress, what behaviour patterns show that an animal is suffering from stress.</p> <p>Explain why providing a natural environment allows an animal to display natural behaviour; and how this reduces stress.</p>
<p>Watch the film clip: Animal Psychology_2</p>	<p>What is the legal responsibility of anyone keeping animals?</p> <p>How does this relate to the Animal Welfare Act 2006?</p> <p>How does this relate to the RSPCA's 5 animal freedoms?</p> <p>In particular the 'freedom to express normal or natural behaviour'?</p>	

<p>Watch the film clip:</p> <p>Normal / Natural Behaviour</p>	<p>Why do many small mammals have a nocturnal lifestyle?</p> <p>Would it be 'normal' or 'natural' for most animals to encounter some stress during their lifetime?</p> <p>Do you feel that it is acceptable for us to intentionally introduce an element of stress to captive animals?</p>	<p>Is it acceptable for stress such as images of a predator, or the calls or odour of a predator to be intentionally introduced, in order to allow the small mammals to behave normally or naturally?</p>
<p>Watch the film clip:</p> <p>Enrichment</p>	<p>How would we create a healthy environment?</p> <p>What might happen as a result of over-cleaning?</p> <p>A well prepared and suitable environment is said to be Enriched. An environment can be enriched by making sure that all the correct equipment and bedding is present - what effect would this have on animal behaviour?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>This may also involve adding tasks or puzzles for animals to interact with.</p> <p>What provision must be given to social animals?</p>	<p>Decide why it is important not to over clean?</p> <p>Design, build and if possible implement a puzzle or task that would enrich an animals environment.</p> <p>Observe and record how the animal interacts with this new addition.</p>

Enclosure alternative options (pros & cons)

Film Clip	Questions to answer (whilst watching)	Tasks to do (after watching)
Watch the film clip: Cage	What makes this enclosure suitable for small mammals? Consider space, ventilation and behaviour. What are the main disadvantages? Consider escaping and cleaning.	There is an Interactive task included in this package - linked to the 'Enclosure options' and 'Natural Environment' lessons within this module. You are required to relate conditions within the natural environment to the enclosure provided.
Watch the film clip: Tank	What makes this more appropriate? Consider escaping and cleaning. What substrates can be used? What behaviour does this allow? What is the main disadvantage of this enclosure design?	
Watch the film clip: Tower	What is the one big advantage of using this enclosure? What natural behaviour does this enable a small mammal to carry out? Does this enclosure have good ventilation?	



Natural Environment

Film Clip

Questions to answer (whilst watching)

Tasks to do (after watching)



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Watch the film clip: Rat	How is the rat an opportunist in relation to food? What are the key aspects relating to normal rat behaviour?	<p>There is an Interactive task included in this package - linked to the 'Enclosure options' and 'Natural Environment' lessons within this module.</p> <p>You are required to relate conditions within the natural environment to the enclosure provided.</p>
Watch the film clip: Mouse	What do mice like to hide from in the wild?	
Watch the film clip: Hamster	Of what do hamsters have a particularly poor perception? Hamsters tend to produce more of an odour. What type of lifestyle do hamsters have as regards social encounters?	
Watch the film clip: Gerbil	What type of lifestyle do gerbils have as regards social encounters? Where do gerbils live? What natural behaviour does this encourage them to carry out in order to create a space in which to live? In what type of landscape and substrate do gerbils live?	