

ANIMAL CARE GUIDE



Ontario
4-H Council



Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

THE 4-H PLEDGE

"I pledge:
My Head to clearer thinking
My Heart to greater loyalty
My Hands to larger service
My Health to better living
For my club, my community and my country."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
AQUARIUM FISH	1
BUDGERIGARS AND OTHER SMALL BIRDS	7
CATS	13
DOGS	19
FERRETS.	25
GOATS	27
PONIES AND HORSES	31
RABBITS	35
REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS	39
SMALL RODENTS	43

This book was prepared by
Bev Wigney, Osgoode
for the Rural Organizations and Services Branch
with Special Thanks to the Advisory Committee:

Sherry Boyce-Found	4-H Resource Specialist	Guelph
Susan Brown	4-H Member	Ruscom
Dr. William Holley	Animal Care Veterinarian, OMAF	Peterborough
Chuck Lamers	Rural Organizations Specialist	Peterborough
Dr. Al Moroz	4-H Leader	Bowmanville
Carol Murphy	4-H Resource Assistant	Guelph
Donna Rawn	Animal Health Technician	Guelph
Ian Rumbles	Rural Organizations Specialist	Essex

This project was jointly funded by the Ontario Ministry of
Agriculture and Food and Agriculture Canada

AQUARIUM FISH

Aquarium fish are easy to care for and fun to watch. It takes very little space to keep an aquarium. After you equip your aquarium, the cost of keeping the fish will be very low. Fish come in a wide variety of shapes and colours. Most are low in cost and easy to care for.

HOUSING:

When you go to a pet shop to look at fish, you will find that there are two kinds of aquariums. There is the "fresh water aquarium" and the "salt water aquarium". The "salt water aquarium" is set up to keep fish that live in salt water in the ocean or sea. These aquariums cost much more to set up and they are harder to look after. You should only consider a "fresh water aquarium" until you are very experienced at keeping aquarium fish.

Aquariums come in a wide variety of sizes. They are usually measured in "gallons" rather than by length or width. A 5 gallon aquarium will hold 5 gallons of water, a 10 gallon will hold 10 gallons of water. You will probably choose an aquarium which is about 5 to 10 gallons.

When you are thinking of getting an aquarium, go to a local pet store and discuss your plans with a salesperson. The salesperson can show you some different tanks and tell you how many and what kind of fish you could keep in the different sizes of tanks. Many times, pet stores will have "aquarium kits" or "packages" which include an aquarium and all of the equipment needed to set the aquarium up (see "Equipment").

OR

If you would be happy to have just one fish, you might want to keep a "Siamese Fighting Fish". These fish breathe air the same way that you do rather than getting air from water (the way that most fish do). A male Siamese Fighting Fish (Betta Splendens) is a small but colorful fish with long fins (the females are not as pretty). You can keep a Siamese Fighting Fish in a very large bowl without a filter system, aerator and heater (equipment which will be needed in an aquarium). BUT, you can only keep one of these fish in the bowl because they will fight with another fish. With good care, a Siamese Fighting Fish will live for about 2 years.

EQUIPMENT:

Once you decide on the size of aquarium, you will need to buy equipment for it. You will need:

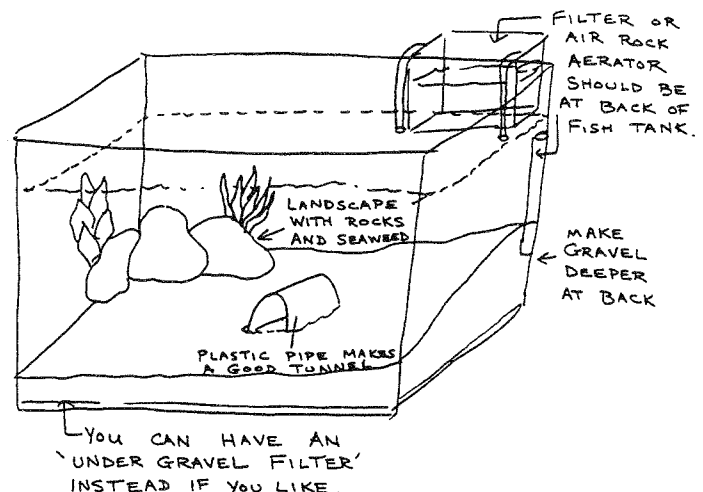
- * An aerator: to add fresh air into the water in the aquarium.
- * A filter system: to remove dirt and debris from the water. You will need a pump to run the aerator and filter. You will also need filter charcoal and filter wool to put into the filter. There are many different types of filters and aerators available. Your pet store can probably recommend

the best kind for the aquarium you have chosen.

- * A heater: to keep the aquarium water fairly warm (most fish like water which is about 24°C (75°F).)
- * A hood or cover with a light: Aquariums covered with a hood with a light in it (will make your fish more colorful looking. A hood will also prevent water from evaporating so quickly. It will also help to keep the water temperature from changing much if the room becomes cooler or hotter. It will also prevent fish from jumping out of the aquarium (where they will quickly die without water).
- * Thermometer: You will need an aquarium thermometer so that you can check the temperature of the water each day. Leave the thermometer in the water at all times.
- * Siphon: a siphon is a tube which is used to suction water from the aquarium. Many siphons have a little squeezable section which starts the water flowing through the siphon.

Other things which you will probably want for your aquarium:

- * Gravel for the bottom: Aquarium gravel comes in many colours and sizes of stone. Avoid large stones which will trap pockets of uneaten fish food and waste (this will pollute the water). Very tiny stones will plug up "under gravel filter" systems. Wash the gravel to remove dust before putting it in your aquarium. Put the gravel into a bucket and fill it with water. Use a stick to stir the gravel around quickly. Pour off the water when it becomes murky. Refill the bucket and wash again. You may have to do this a few times until the water is clear after the gravel is stirred. Mix the gravel with oyster shell and put it into your aquarium. Slope the gravel so that it is about twice as deep at the back as it is at the front. Gravel should be about 25 mm. (1 inch) deep at the front and about 65 mm. (2 1/2 inches) deep at the back.
- * Rocks or coral: It is safest to buy these at the pet store. Many pieces of coral which may be bought as ornaments have been treated with chemicals to bleach them. They will poison your fish after being in the water for a while. Some rocks change the minerals in the aquarium water and cause stains on equipment. Rocks from a stream can carry disease.
- * Dip Net: You will want a dip net to catch your fish when necessary. Do not catch your fish with your hand. You can damage the fish very easily with your hands.
- * Plants: Plants help to put extra air into the water. They provide a safe place for fish to rest. They also make an aquarium much nicer to look at. It is usually good to pick



about 3 or 4 different plants for the aquarium. Before you put new plants into your aquarium, wash them in lukewarm water with a few drops of hydrogen peroxide (let them sit in this for a few minutes). Plants should be planted in the aquarium gravel so that the roots are spread out and well covered, BUT be careful not to plant them too deeply. Just the roots should be below the gravel. Make a hole that is much larger than the roots. Hold the plant in the hole with the roots spread out. Drop gravel (a little at a time) over the roots until the gravel is built up level with the gravel in the rest of the aquarium.

SETTING UP YOUR AQUARIUM:

When you go to buy your aquarium, do not buy your fish at the same time. It will take a few days to get everything set-up and working properly in the aquarium. Your fish can't be added to the aquarium until everything is right.

1. Begin by washing your aquarium. You can wash it using warm water with a little table salt dissolved in it. Wash the aquarium well and then rinse it out two or three times with clear tap water.
2. If you will be using an "under gravel filter", this should be put in place next. There are usually tubes at each of the back corners (for the aerators) and these should be put in place. Put the washed gravel in. (It goes on top of the filter OR right on the bottom of the aquarium if you are using another kind of filter system). The gravel should have been washed as explained in the "Equipment" section.
3. Add water to the tank. Start with about 30 centimeters of water.
4. Arrange the gravel in a sloping shape so that it is deeper at the back than at the front.
5. Put your plants into place in the gravel (as explained before).
6. Slowly add tap water to the tank trying not to disturb the gravel and plants. Fill the aquarium up to a level about 10 centimeters from the top. Because you will leave the full aquarium sitting for a few days, it does not matter if the water is chlorinated (as found in most towns and cities).
7. Put the thermometer in the water (some thermometers have little suction cups that hold them to the side of aquarium glass). Place the thermometer in a spot where it will be easy to see).
8. Put the heater in place. Most heaters clip onto the top of the tank and have an element inside of a glass tube which hangs down into the water. You will have to read the instructions and learn how to adjust the heater.
9. Put the lid onto the aquarium and leave it for a few days. Adjust the heater as needed until the water is at the right temperature for the fish.

When everything is ready, you may bring home your new fish. The pet store will put them in a plastic bag with some water. When you

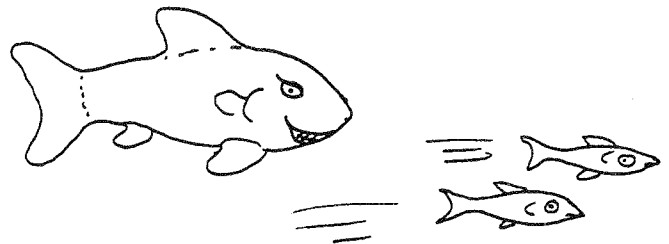
arrive home, place the plastic bags into the water in the aquarium. Leave the fish in the bags for 1 to 3 hours (this gives the fish a chance to adjust to the temperature change between the water in the bag and the water in the aquarium). After this, undo the bags and let them tip over so that the fish can swim out of the bags. After they swim out, remove the bags.

New aquariums kill many tropical fish each year. Fish must be added to a new aquarium very slowly. Two small fish a week is enough. Adding a handful of gravel from a disease-free aquarium that has been in use for a while, will help to prepare a new aquarium for fish.

SELECTION:

When you visit the pet store, you will find that there are many different types of aquarium fish. Some are not too expensive and others are very expensive (over \$10 - \$20 each). When you start out, you should not buy the very expensive kinds of fish. You should also decide if you want one kind of fish or several different kinds.

An aquarium with more than one kind of fish is called a "community aquarium". It is very important to choose fish that get along well with each other. Some fish will eat other kinds of fish smaller than themselves. Some small fish will attack and bite the fins on larger fish until the large fish is badly injured. Some fish like warmer water than others. Some like different food than others. It is quite hard to know which fish get along best (until you are an expert!). It is usually best to let the pet store owner recommend a few fish that you can keep together.



CHOOSE FISH
OF SIMILAR SIZE AND TYPE.
WATCH OUT FOR BREEDS THAT
LIKE TO MAKE A QUICK SNACK
OUT OF OTHER FISH!

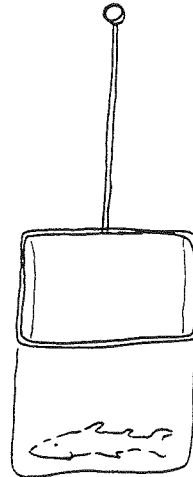
If you want only one kind of fish, you might like some of the "live-bearing" fish like Guppies, Mollies or Swordtails. Buy a male and one or two females. They will probably give birth to very tiny baby fish in two or three months if conditions in the aquarium are right for breeding. It can be fun to watch the new babies grow up to be big fish.

When you go to buy fish, choose a store which has clean looking aquariums. Do not buy fish from a tank which has any dead fish floating in the water. Do not buy fish from an aquarium which has living fish floating to the surface, sinking to the bottom or tilting to one side as they swim. When you are bringing home your first new fish, they will be put into the tank together. FROM THEN ON, always quarantine new fish for about a week before you add them to your tank. This will prevent your healthy fish from catching

a disease (if the new fish is carrying an illness). If the new fish is still healthy a week after bringing it home, it can go into the aquarium. Most tropical fish owners keep a small tank as a quarantine tank or "recovery tank" for fish that are ill.

HANDLING:

Always use a dip net when catching your fish to move them from one place to another. Be careful when using the net. Do not trap fish against the glass with the net (you will easily crush and injure them). If you are moving the fish from one place to another, do so quickly. Don't keep the fish out of the water for long. Always put your hand across the opening of the net after lifting it from the water. This will keep the fish from flipping out and ending up on the floor.



WHEN MOVING FISH WITH A DIP NET, BE SURE THAT FISH IS IN BOTTOM OF NET BEFORE IT IS LIFTED FROM WATER. PUT YOUR HAND OVER OPENING OF NET TO KEEP FISH FROM FALLING OUT. NEVER KEEP A FISH OUT OF THE WATER FOR MORE THAN A FEW SECONDS.

FEEDING:

Fish like to have a variety of foods. It is usually good to keep a few different types of food on hand. There are many "freeze-dried" foods available. Choose a kind of flakes, a crumbled kind, a freeze-dried cube, etc. to give variety. Fish also enjoy brine shrimp which can be hatched for them. Never put too much food into an aquarium. Fish only need a tiny amount of food each day. You should sprinkle a tiny bit of food onto the surface of the water. Watch to see if the fish come to eat it. If they are hungry, they will swim up and start eating. You can then sprinkle a little more food onto the water. If the fish are not very hungry, they will ignore the food and it will sink to the bottom (don't give them any more food that day). Fish need not be fed every day. You can go one or two days between feedings without hurting the fish. Always be careful not to overfeed the fish. Uneaten food sinks to the bottom and then goes bad. It will make the aquarium messy and pollute the water. It is a good idea to keep a couple of little scavenger fish such as catfish in the aquarium to help clean up food sitting on the bottom. Snails can be used, BUT they will multiply quickly and have been known to carry illnesses to humans so they are not recommended. Fish also like to nibble on aquarium plants. This is why it is a good idea to have some plants in the tank.

GROOMING:

None necessary.

TRAINING:

You can teach some fish to jump from the water for food which you hold between your fingers. Siamese Fighting Fish are very quick to learn to do this (however, they will sometimes bite your finger instead of the food -- but it doesn't really hurt).

EXERCISE:

None needed. Provide interesting things such as rocks, coral, plants, little glass figurines which the fish can swim around, through, under or over.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Every few weeks you should siphon about one third of the water out of your aquarium. This water should be replaced with clean water which has been allowed to sit for about a week. Before you add it, be sure that this water is at about the same temperature as the water in your aquarium. If it is very different, the temperature will shock and kill your fish AND it might break the glass on the heater (which will also give an electric shock to your fish!). The water that you siphon should be the water at the bottom of the aquarium. By pointing the siphon tube at the gravel on the bottom, you will remove deposits of dirt and algae on the gravel. This will make your aquarium much cleaner.

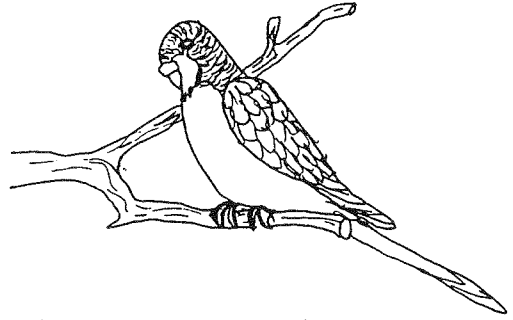
You may also want to wash the glass on your aquarium. Most pet stores sell foam pads with handles which are used to slowly scrub the glass. Some also sell long handled scrapers to scrape off algae deposits on the glass. If the aquarium sits in the sun this will encourage algae growth.

HEALTH CARE:

- * No vaccinations are necessary.
- * Prevention is most important in an aquarium. Try not to introduce diseases to the aquarium. Put new fish into quarantine in another tank until you know that they are healthy. Wash new plants very well in lukewarm water with a few drops of hydrogen peroxide (let them sit in this for a few minutes).
- * Salt is recommended for all freshwater aquariums. Use one teaspoon of non-iodized salt per gallon of water. This will help to prevent parasites.
- * Keep the aquarium water at the right temperature. This is very important in winter when rooms in your house may get quite cool.
- * If you have an outbreak of illness, you may find that you can get medication from your pet store that will help your fish. Usually, the medication is added to the water and the temperature of the tank is made warmer than usual for several days. This will sometimes stop the disease.
- * Remove sick, dead or dying fish from the aquarium as soon as you see them. This will help to prevent further spread of disease.
- * Remember: Fish are fragile creatures and they do die occasionally no matter how well you look after them. Many fish have short lifespans and do not live for more than a year or two so some will die each year.

BUDGERIGARS AND OTHER SMALL BIRDS

Budgerigars are a small member of the parrot family. They are native to Australia. The name "Budgerigar" comes from the name "Betcherrygah", a native Australian (aboriginal) word meaning "good bird". Many people now refer to the Budgerigar as the "budgie bird".



Budgerigars come in a large number of colours from white through yellow to green, blue and violet. They are friendly birds which enjoy human company or the company of others of their kind. They like to whistle and sing. It is possible to teach them to speak a simple word or two with patient training.

Other Small Birds:

Finch: There are several types of finches which may be purchased at pet stores. These are small active birds which like to sing. There are many different kinds of finches and these come in various colours.

Canary: The canary is actually a member of the finch family. The males are usually a bright yellow and the females usually a duller greenish yellow. They are known for their singing, particularly the males.

HOUSING:

All of the small birds may be kept in bird cages. These are usually purchased rather than homemade. Most cages are made of many fine steel bars. The cage may have bars on all four sides as well as on top, or it may have bars only on the front and top with solid walls on the other three sides. If an all wire cage is used be very careful not to place it in drafts. Most cages will have glass panels which line the lower part of the cage. These sides will keep seeds and sand from being scattered outside of the cage when the bird is active and scratching about.

Cages should be large enough to allow the birds to fly about. Square or rectangular cages will provide a better flying area than a round or tall cage. If it is impossible to have a large cage, the bird should be allowed to fly outside of the cage once a day or at least several times a week. (See "Exercise" section for safety precautions!) A cage should have a removable clean-out tray. The cage should also have a door which is large enough to allow you to easily put your hand through the opening.

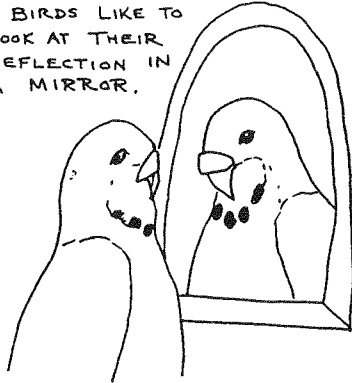
The cage should be placed in a room of moderate temperature in a warmer area of the house. A cage should not be placed where the sun will shine directly on it as this will make the bird too hot.

EQUIPMENT:

Bird cages should have a sand or fine gravel floor (the sand or gravel should be changed weekly). The cage should have some type of perches for the bird to sit on as it flies from place to place

in the cage. The bird may also enjoy having a part of a branch in its cage. It can climb this or fly from one part to another. Some birds like to bathe so a small bowl of water should be placed in the cage for the bird to bathe in.

BIRDS LIKE TO
LOOK AT THEIR
REFLECTION IN
A MIRROR.



NOTE: Budgies are not usually fond of baths. Other items which might be placed in the cage are things which the bird can climb on; swinging perches, a bell on a cord, a mirror, or any other item which might entertain the bird. If you are breeding birds, you will also need a nesting box.

SELECTION:

It is best to buy a young bird if you wish to train it to perch on your hand, sing, or talk. Young birds are more willing to learn and you will be sure to have them for a few years. Of the finches, males are usually the best singers. Male budgerigars are usually the easiest to teach to talk. If you wish to have birds sing or talk, it is better to have only one bird. Budgerigars will not learn to talk if they have the company of another bird in their cage.

HANDLING:

Birds should either be taught to perch on the hand (see TRAINING), or they should be picked up by grasping the bird's body with their wings held gently against the sides of the body. Never pick a bird up with its wings free from your hand. It will beat them and may cause possible injury to its wings. If your bird bites when handled, wrap it in a small towel or facecloth while holding it to trim nails or do other procedures.



HOLD BIRD
IN YOUR HAND
WITH WINGS
DOWN AGAINST
BIRD'S BODY.

FEEDING:

Water: Should be available in a water bowl at all times. Vitamin supplements may be added for better health in birds (particularly budgies).

Food: Commercial Budgie (or Parrakeet) Seed Mixture for Budgerigars. Canaries and finches will be fed Finch Food or Canary Seed Mixture. A "condition food" should also be used to make sure the bird gets all of the nutrients it needs. Feed cups should be emptied and refilled with fresh seeds each day.

Treats: Washed greens such as spinach are good in small quantities. They should be left in the cage for only a few minutes and the left-overs removed. This will prevent overeating and possible illness. Little clumps

of twigs may be suspended in the cage. Budgies like to chew on wood and these will provide interesting food for the bird. Twigs from fruit trees, elm, maple, willow and nut trees will not be harmful to your bird.

Grit Foods: Birds must have access to a grit food to aid digestion. You may purchase oyster shell and mineral grit or other types of grit at the pet store. Crushed egg shells (from hen's eggs) are also good.

Cuttlebone: can be supplied for birds to chew on. It supplies minerals to the bird's diet.

All food and water should be offered in feed cups which are attached to the outside of the cage. Most feeders are mounted on the outside of the cage. They have a part which extends to the inside of the cage for the bird to eat out of. This will help to prevent soiling of food or water.

GROOMING:

Budgerigars may need to have their nails clipped occasionally (when they grow very long). These can be clipped with a nail trimmer by carefully removing the very end of the point of the claw. There is a "quick" in a bird's nail as in other animal's nails, so be careful not to cut the quick (the soft inner part of the claw where the nerves and veins are). The beaks of some birds may need trimming. This should be done by a veterinarian. Birds may have the long feathers on one wing clipped if you do not want them to fly. These should be the long outer feathers on ONE of the wings. They do not need to be cut close to the wing. It is only necessary to remove about half of the length of each feather. Carefully restrain your bird and use scissors to clip the feathers.

NOTE: Clipping of feathers is not necessary if you would like to allow your bird to fly about in a safe room in your house.

Most birds like to bath. Provide a small bowl of water in the bird's cage for it to bathe in. If your bird does not like to bath, you may spray it with lukewarm water in a pump spray bottle about once a week. Some birds will allow you to bath them under a small stream of water from the nozzle in a tap while they sit perched on your finger.

TRAINING:

Perching on your hand: Birds may be taught to perch on your hand and will allow themselves to be carried about once they are used to handling. Begin by letting your bird get used to the sight of your hand. Put your hand next to the cage at first until the bird is not afraid. Next, open the cage door and put your hand inside. Do not try to catch the bird. Just allow the bird to become used to seeing your hand. This may take a few days of short "lessons". Your bird may come to your hand on its own once it is used to seeing it in the cage. You may also want to put some green food or seeds on your palm to encourage the bird to come to your hand. When the bird has learned this, you may gently remove the bird from

the cage while it sits on your hand. Whenever you remove the bird from the cage for exercise, be sure that the room is "SAFE". See note under exercise.

Talking: Some birds may be taught to talk. They will learn this best if they are kept in a cage alone. You must spend some time with them each day while you repeat the same word or words over and over. This takes great patience. It may take a bird weeks or months to learn a simple word or two. When you are around your bird, you should only say the word or words that you have chosen to teach it. Male birds are usually chosen for talking.

Singing: Canaries and finches like to sing. Males are usually chosen for singing. Birds sing best if they are kept separated from other birds. They may be encouraged to sing by whistling clear notes at them. Birds can also be taught to sing by playing "bird song" records.

EXERCISE:

Most birds enjoy flying as their main form of exercise. It is best to have a cage which is large enough to allow the bird to fly from one perch to another. It is also a good idea to allow birds out to fly in the house regularly. If you do let your bird out of its cage to fly, pick a room to use and then take the following "safety precautions":

- * Close all windows and doors
- * Make sure that the chimney flue of a fireplace is closed and that there are no open flames in the room
- * Close curtains so that the bird does not fly at the glass
- * Turn off any fans (particularly large ceiling fans!)
- * Remove or cover any large mirrors
- * Remove pets such as cats or dogs.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Clean the bird's cage at least once a week. Most cages have a clean out tray on the bottom. Slide the tray out and dispose of soiled sand and litter. You may wish to line the cage bottom with newspaper which is cut to the same size as the tray. Cover with a thin layer of budgie gravel or fine sand. Every two weeks, use a stiff brush and some hot water with bleach and disinfect the tray and lower bars of cage.

Use a wire brush or scraper knife to scrape wooden perch bars clean. Wash all water and food bowls regularly in mild detergent and warm water.

HEALTH CARE:

- * Vaccinations are not usually necessary.
- * Most health problems are avoided by keeping the cage clean and dry. Problems from a damp or dirty cage are sore feet (from walking on damp or dirty floor), colds (from dampness and also from drafts -- keep birdcages in warm area of house).
- * Other problems may be caused by feeds -- too much green foods will cause diarrhea.
- * External parasites -- mites can be a problem. Clean and disinfect cage and dust with a mite powder or spray.
- * Molting -- all birds molt at least once a year. Molting means that the birds lose their feathers and grow new feathers. Molting may begin because of a change in the season, or it may happen because of a change in the diet. Many bird owners feed a special diet during molting because the bird is using more energy, nutrients, etc... during this time.

CATS

Cats make ideal indoor companion animals. They are quiet and clean. They are usually quite independent and do not mind being alone some of the time. There are many purebred breeds of cats, but most pet cats are of no particular breed.

HOUSING:

Cats are usually kept inside the house or in a barn, particularly in the winter months. While they may spend time outside even on cold days, cats like to have a nice warm spot to curl up in when sleeping. Because cats may be litter trained (trained to use a litter box as their "bathroom"), they may be kept indoors all of the time. This is usually safer for them. They do not like being tied on a chain or rope unless they are raised to do so as kittens. However, when they roam free, they are always in danger of being chased by a dog or hit by a car.

EQUIPMENT:

You may try to fix up a sleeping place for your cat, BUT cats usually like to pick their own spot to sleep. They will usually want to sleep on a pillow on the couch, on a favorite chair, or even on your bed.

You should supply some form of scratching post for your cat to exercise its claws on. Cats like to scratch their front claws on wood or upholstery (or even curtains!). Because they can damage chairs, beds, or other objects, it is important to supply a scratching post early in life. This could be a short piece of log, taller than the cat, nailed to a base made from a piece of plywood. You might want to cover the log with a piece of scrap carpet (most cats will like this even better than plain wood). When your cat starts to scratch at something it shouldn't, take it to the scratching post and set its front feet on the post. In time, it will probably learn to use only the post for scratching.

The cat should have its own food and water bowls. These should be washed out every day before refilling with food and water.

SELECTION:

If you wish to have a purebred cat, you will have to spend some time looking for the breed that you want. You may attend a cat show in your area and get the name of a breeder with the kind of cats you want. You may have to order a kitten if they do not have any at that time. You may also find purebred kittens advertised in local newspapers. Purebred kittens may also be purchased at a local pet store.

If you don't want a purebred cat, you should be able to find a kitten in your own area. Watch the noticeboards at grocery stores, the feed store, post office or at a veterinary clinic. You may also find kittens advertised in the pet section of the classified

ads in your local newspaper. The humane society in your area will probably have kittens or older cats looking for a home.

It is usually better to get a kitten because they will have an easier time getting used to their new home. An older cat may not settle into a new home very well. If you bring an older cat into your home, you should be very careful to keep it inside for at least a few days. Some older cats will run away if they have a chance to get outside. They may try to return to their old home.

If you choose to buy a kitten, be sure that it is in very good health. It should be about 8 weeks old and it should be eating food and milk from a bowl and be weaned from its mother's milk. Avoid kittens which have watery or runny eyes, a blocked nose or those which sneeze or have a hard time breathing. Diseases are common in young cats which have not been vaccinated, particularly if they are raised in the barn.

The kitten that you choose should be active and curious. It should be friendly and enjoy being petted. Avoid any kitten which seems nervous or hisses if you pick it up. These kittens may grow up disliking being handled.

HANDLING:

Kittens should be handled very gently so that they learn to enjoy being picked up and stroked. Be very careful not to drop your young cat. When you pick up a young kitten, you may pick it up by the loose skin over the shoulders with one hand while you slide your other hand under the cat to support its weight. Carry your cat snuggled against your chest with one arm underneath it to support its weight. Use your other hand to hold the cat against you so that it doesn't try to jump from your arm. Older cats may be picked up in much the same way if they are small. Larger cats are usually picked up by putting one hand between the front legs with your palm on the cat's chest. Lift the front of the cat slightly and then place your other hand under the hind end of the cat to support its weight as you lift it up. Hold the cat against your chest with its weight supported on one arm. Use your free hand to hold the cat against you.

If you must take your cat into a strange place, it should be taken in a carrying crate or cage. A frightened cat can be very difficult to control as it scratches and fights to get away from you. This is very true if there are any strange dogs about.

FEEDING:

Many people think cats are picky eaters. In fact, most cats are easy to please. You can buy many kinds of cat foods so it should not be too hard to find a type that your cat will eat. Feeding a variety of food flavours to a kitten will help to prevent a picky eater. Most cats like semi-moist or canned food. BUT, dry food is good because it helps to keep a cat's teeth clean. If you feed dry cat food, be sure that it is in small pieces. This is very

important when feeding kittens. A kitten may choke if it tries to swallow a large piece of dry food. Dry food which is in small flat, round or square pieces is better than food in chunks or ball-shapes. Provide food which is low in ash and magnesium.

Adult cats are usually fed twice a day. Kittens are fed three or four times a day. Moist foods (such as canned food) should be fed in a small amount which the cat can eat soon after serving. Dry food may be left in the bowl all day long for the cat to nibble on when it is hungry. You may want to moisten dry food a little when feeding kittens. Kittens have different needs than adult cats. Kittens need food that will help them grow.

Most cats like a small bowl of milk each day. BUT, watch for any signs of loose droppings or diarrhea. Milk can cause digestive problems. Milk is not needed in the diet if a good quality of food is fed. Cats must have a bowl of water available at all times. This is very important when feeding a dry food to your cat.

Do not feed dog food to a cat. It does not contain enough food which can be digested by cats. Cats must have protein from meat, fish, or milk. They cannot eat food which contains a lot of grain. Many dog foods have a large amount of grain. Cats should not be fed raw meat or have an all-meat diet.

If you are keeping a cat as a "mouser" in the barn (a "mouser" is a cat which is supposed to catch mice), it must still be fed every day. Some people may tell you that a cat will not catch mice if it is well fed. This is not true. A good mouser will hunt for mice just because it likes to do so. Some cats like to hunt more than others. If you don't feed a cat well, it will probably go looking for a new home on another farm.

GROOMING:

Cats are very clean animals and like to spend many hours licking and grooming their coats. Short haired cats will need little grooming, but they will benefit from being brushed with a soft bristled brush. Long haired cats may get tangled fur, especially if they like to go outside. Brush them each day with a soft bristled brush. Gently remove tangles with a fine-toothed comb. Long haired cats can swallow a lot of hair while licking their coats. They may need a laxative every now and then to help pass the hair balls that can develop.



Cats do not usually need to be bathed. If it is necessary to bathe a cat, wash it in warm water and a mild pet or baby shampoo. Dry it gently with a towel. You can blow it dry with a hair dryer but be very careful that it doesn't get too hot. Do not let the cat out into cool air until its hair is completely dry.

Cats should have their nails trimmed when necessary. Hold the cat's foot with one hand. Use your thumb to press the center large pad on the bottom of the cat's foot. This will make the cat's claws come out of their sheaths within the toes. You will then be able to snip the sharp hook off of the tip of each claw. Be very careful not to cut into the "quick" of the claw (the soft inner part of the claw where the nerves and veins are). You may finish the trimming job by using an emery board or a fine file to smooth the cut nails.

TRAINING:

Most cats are very independent and do not like to do anything that they don't want to do. They do not usually like to learn tricks the way that a dog does. You must usually reward a cat with food to get it to do what you ask.

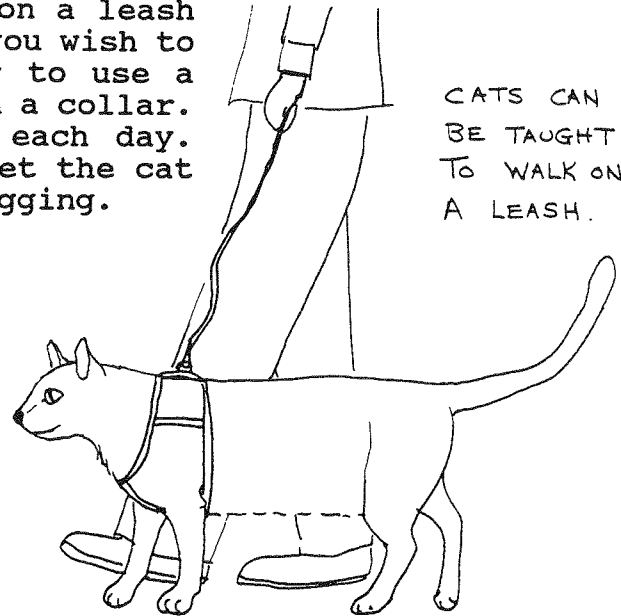
Your cat should learn its name. Begin calling the cat by its name as soon as you bring it home. Use its name when you talk to it. Call it by its name when you put food in its bowl. If you have a treat for the cat, call its name and give it the treat when it comes. Unfortunately, even if a cat knows its name, it may not come when called. It may just purr loudly when you call its name. Small treats, like a piece of cooked fish, may be used to tempt the cat to come when called.

Cats may be trained to wear a collar. If you put a collar on the cat while it is still young, it will learn to accept it. A stretch collar is best because it will slip off if it becomes snagged on something. The collar should be the kind that reflects light so that the cat may be seen if it goes outside at night. Some people put a small bell on their cat's collar to help warn birds that the cat is around. A name tag (with your name and telephone number) or a numbered rabies tag from your vet's clinic will help to identify the cat if it becomes lost.

If your cat will be inside most of the time, you will probably want to "litter train" it. You can do this by taking your kitten to its litter box first thing in the morning and last thing at night. It should be taken to the box right after eating each meal. It may help to keep the kitten confined to a small area of the house. The litter box should be in that area. Once the kitten is using the litter box regularly, you may let it loose in other areas of the house. Be sure that the litter box is kept very clean. The litter box should not be cleaned by expectant mothers. Always wash your hands well after changing a cat's litter box. Do not use litters with deodorizers. A cat will not use a litter box which has become damp or soiled, but a slightly soiled litter may be helpful in first training the cat.

EXERCISE:

It may be difficult to teach your cat to go for a walk with you. Cats do not like to be on a leash unless they are taught while young. If you wish to walk your cat on a leash, it is better to use a small harness (Figure 8 type) rather than a collar. Put the harness on for a little while each day. After a few days, attach the leash and let the cat walk around the house with the leash dragging. Keep a close eye on the cat to be sure that it does not become frightened by the leash or tangled around anything in the house. When the cat seems comfortable with the leash, begin taking it for very short walks. Pull gently on the leash when you want to go forward. When the cat starts forward, release the pressure on the leash. This will teach the cat to walk with you because it will learn that the leash only pulls when it doesn't follow you. If you do walk your cat, watch out for dogs that may run up and attack your cat.



Cats can get most of the exercise that they need by playing around the house. Find toys that the cat will enjoy playing with. Most cats like a small ball or other object that they can bat around the floor. Many cats like small stuffed toys that they can wrestle with. A little cloth mouse stuffed with catnip is a popular cat toy. You can have fun playing with your cat if you make a small toy which can be pulled along on a string. You can hide behind a chair or couch and toss the toy out where the cat can see it. Make the toy hop towards you by pulling the string in quick jerks. Your cat will have fun "hunting" and "attacking" its prey.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Cats are quite clean and easy to clean up after. Keep the cat's litter box very clean. When you change the litter, wash the litter box with detergent and warm water. Keep a special brush (a toilet brush works well), just for this job.

HEALTH CARE:

- * Vaccinations: Very important, even if the cat stays inside all of the time. Talk to your veterinarian about vaccinations which are needed to keep a cat healthy. All cats should be vaccinated for rabies (for your protection as well as the cat's).
- * Internal parasites: Talk to your veterinarian about worming. He/she will probably ask you to bring a stool sample (sample of the pet's droppings) in for examination under a microscope. Your veterinarian can then give you the right kind of worming medication needed to treat the worms.

- * Ear Mites: Cause dirty or scabby looking inner ears. These may be treated with mineral oil in the ear or your veterinarian will have an ear medication which will get rid of the mites.
- * Fleas: May be a problem if your cat is scratching parts of its coat. Use a flea powder which is made for cats. You may also use a cat flea collar. Be certain that any powder or spray is made for use on cats because it may cause poisoning if it isn't.
- * Hairballs: They can cause a cat to vomit. Put a small amount of petroleum jelly on the cat's nose. Once the cat licks it off, repeat the process. Continue until the cat has been given a thimble full of petroleum jelly over several applications.

DOGS

Dogs come in many different breeds and a large variety of sizes, shapes and colours. Dogs are usually friendly and enjoy the company of people. They are smart animals that can be taught many tasks and tricks.



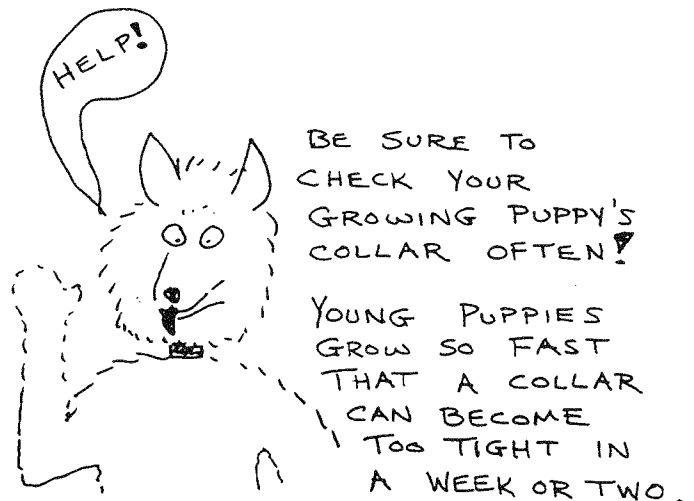
HOUSING:

Many breeds of dogs may be kept inside or outside. Large breeds of dogs with long coats may find the inside of your house too warm for comfort. These dogs should be kept in an outside kennel with a well-constructed dog house. A dog that lives inside most of the time will find it too cold to stay in an outside dog house during the winter. This is because it does not have a chance to grow a thick coat to keep it warm. A dog house should be just large enough for the dog to enter and turn around in it to curl up. A dog house which is too big will be cold and will provide little shelter. The dog house should be rectangular rather than square. The entry door is best located on one end of one of the long sides. The door should be just large enough for the dog to enter easily. The bottom edge of the entry door may be a few inches above the ground to prevent rain or snow from blowing in. The dog house should have either a thick mat on the floor or it may be bedded down with clean straw. A burlap sack stuffed with cedar wood shavings or clean straw is also good.

If your dog stays indoors most of the time, you may give it a dog bed to lie on. This should have some type of padding inside such as a pillow, a mat or a folded blanket. Like the cat, many dogs will choose their own places to lie. Dogs should be taught to stay off of furniture and beds because they often come in from outdoors with muddy or wet feet.

EQUIPMENT:

Your dog should have its own food and water bowls. Your dog should have a collar which fits snugly (but not too tightly) on the neck. The leash should be strong and lightweight. For walking and training, an adjustable chain collar known as a hair-saver is good (it has long links which do not pull out the hair on long haired dogs). The clip on the leash should be snapped into two links of the collar which will make the collar fit comfortably without slipping over the dog's head. Do not use this collar as a choke chain collar. A choke-chain



collar is not necessary for most dogs. Dogs should be trained so that a choke collar is not needed. If you tie your dog outside on a chain, be sure that it has a swivel. This will stop the chain from tightly twisting into kinks which would cause the dog's collar to twist and tighten.

Brushes might include a soft, short-bristled brush or rubber "hound glove" brush for short haired dogs. Long haired dogs will require a stiffer bristled brush, a wire toothed brush, and a steel comb. A pair of nail clippers will also be needed. Use with caution.

SELECTION:

There are many different kinds of dogs available. Before you look for a dog, decide what size to get and the type of hair coat you want. All puppies are cute, but it is important to remember that some puppies grow into big dogs that can weigh as much as you! Short haired dogs are easy to groom and keep clean. Long haired dogs will demand extra time to keep them well groomed (particularly in shedding season when dogs loose their heavy winter coats).

If you want a purebred dog, read about the different breeds in dog books from the library. A purebred dog will have registration papers from the Canadian Kennel Club (some breeds of working dogs such as Border Collies are registered through the American Sheep Dog Association). The owner should make all of the arrangements to register the dog and transfer it into your name. Look for purebred dogs by:

- reading dog magazines,
- attending dog shows,
- looking on the notice board at your veterinary clinic,
- or contacting a local kennel club (many clubs have an advertisement in the pet section of the newspaper),
- checking at pet shops.

Before you visit a dog breeder, you should decide if you want "pet" or "show" quality. Most breeders sell "show" puppies from their best show dogs for a higher price. The best puppies from a purebred litter may also be sold for "show". The "pet" quality puppies will also be very nice, but they are not meant for show. When you buy a "pet" quality puppy, you usually sign a contract promising that you will not use the dog for breeding. Some breeders may request that the dog is spayed or neutered before it reaches breeding age. If you buy a purebred dog, it should be health checked and guaranteed against such genetic defects as deafness, blindness, and hip dysplasia (a bone problem that causes lameness in older dogs). Most breeders will encourage you to take your new puppy to your own veterinarian to have it checked over right after you buy it. If your veterinarian finds something wrong, most breeders will replace the puppy or return your money. Most purebred puppies will have had their first vaccinations and worming before you pick them up.

If you do not want a registered dog, you may choose a dog from the humane society or local dog pound. Other ways you might find a dog:

- a neighbour with a litter of puppies to sell or give away,
- check notice boards at the grocery or feed store,
- veterinary clinic,
- pet section of the classified ads of the newspaper.

When buying an unregistered dog, try to see the mother (or both parents if possible). This is the only sure way to know how large the dog will grow to be. The puppy may be small now, but it may grow to be half the size of a pony when it is a year old. If you only wanted a little dog, this could be a bad surprise.

Choose a healthy puppy with clean eyes and nostrils. Avoid puppies that have nasal discharge. The puppy should be about 8 weeks old. It should be eating dog food and be weaned from its mother's milk. Puppies should be "socialized" so that they will be friendly and easy to train. A good dog breeder will begin spending extra time with the puppies by the time they are three weeks of age. This should continue until the puppy is ready to be weaned and go to its new home. You should ensure that your puppy has received a lot of human contact in the first few weeks of its life. A puppy raised in a kennel with little human contact may grow up to be fearful of humans... a situation that can lead to "fear biting" -- dogs that snap and bite because they are nervous.

Whether the puppy is purebred or not, choose a puppy that is outgoing, friendly and playful. Watch the puppies playing by themselves. Some will be more active and playful than others. One or two may be bullies over the rest. You would be best to choose one of the playful ones that does not seem over-aggressive (the bullying kind). Avoid a shy puppy that tries to hide behind the others. It may end up being nervous and shy. To see how friendly a puppy is, kneel and clap your hands. Did the puppy come towards you?

HANDLING:

Your puppy should be taught at a young age to wear a collar and leash. Start teaching your dog to follow you on its leash rather than carrying the dog about. It is not a good idea to pick up puppies that will grow to be very large. These puppies should not be encouraged to climb onto your lap either. This is because they will grow to be very large some day and you don't want them climbing all over you. Picking a dog up also encourages it to jump up to be close to your face. This can be a very annoying habit as the dog becomes bigger and stronger. Visitors will not appreciate having a dog jumping up against them when they come to your house.

Start grooming your dog at an early age. Teach it to sit quietly while you trim its nails or clean its ears. Build trust at an early age. You will have a hard time doing these jobs if the dog grows up to be nervous about being handled.

FEEDING:

Puppies should be fed three times a day. Give them an amount of food which can be eaten within 15 minutes. They will not eat constantly for 15 minutes. They may move away and come back. Whatever is left at the end of 15 minutes is not required by the animal. They should then be taken to their "bathroom" area because they will probably urinate or have a bowel movement after eating. Puppies may have a small bowl of milk with each feeding. However, if this causes diarrhea, remove the milk from the diet. Adult dogs may be fed twice a day. Feed according to directions on the type of dog food you are buying. Feed a good quality dog food. Dry foods are best because they keep the dog's teeth cleaner. You may add a teaspoonful of wheat germ oil to the dog food each day to improve the dog's coat and skin. If you have a very active dog, you can buy a dog food made especially for dogs that are active or work hard. If your dog is overweight, you can buy low calorie dog food made for weight reducing diets. Water should be available at all times. Don't forget to provide water for your dog when it is outside in its yard too! (especially during warm weather). Do not feed bones to your dog.

GROOMING:

Groom short haired dogs with a short-bristled brush. Groom long-haired dogs with a wire-toothed brush or a hard-bristled brush. Remove tangles using a steel-toothed comb. Brush and comb dogs in the same direction as their coats grow. Long haired dogs may be combed upwards to make their hair fluffier.

A dog's nails may need to be trimmed every 3 or 4 months. Avoid cutting the "quick" inside the nail (where the nerves and veins are) because this will cause heavy bleeding. If your dog has very dark nails you might take it to your veterinarian for nail trimming. Dark nails are very difficult to trim.

Dogs can be bathed when needed. Use a mild pet or baby shampoo. Protect the dog's eyes with a drop of mineral oil. Be very sure that you rinse well and the shampoo is removed.

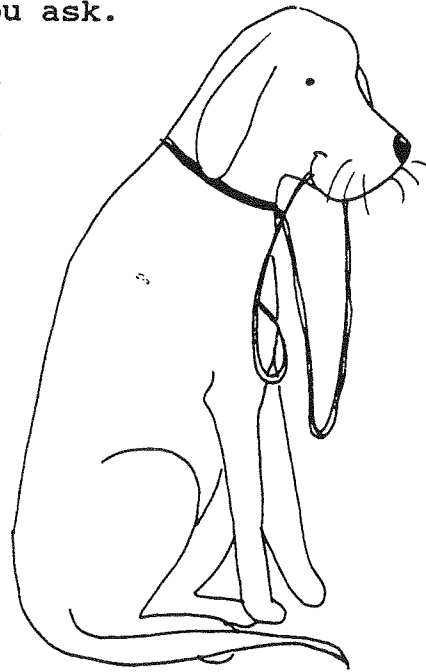
TRAINING:

Dogs should be trained to come when called. Name your puppy as soon as you bring it home. Use its name whenever you speak to it. When your puppy is six months old you could enroll it in a dog obedience class. These classes are often held on week-ends at many public or high schools. You will learn to train your dog in class. Your dog will also learn to ignore other dogs, noises and activity and listen only to you for instructions.

Teaching your dog to SIT: One of the first commands to teach your dog is "Sit". Say the word "sit" and push down gently on the dog's back over the hindquarters. Keep teaching the dog to "sit" using this command and action. The dog will soon learn to sit when

asked. Be sure to pat the dog after it does as you ask.

Teaching your dog to walk on a leash: When you walk a dog, it should walk on your left side. This is so your right hand is free to open doors or gates. Being on the left is also safer for your pet when you walk along a street. It will be the furthest from traffic on that side. Do not let the dog pull out and away to the side. Keep the leash short by holding it in your right hand with your left hand around the leash to control your pull on the leash. Give the dog just enough leash to allow it to walk next to your heel. When walking a dog, walk with a quick long step to match a dog's walking speed. Your dog will be less likely to pull away to look at or smell things if you keep it moving along at a fast walk. Say "heel" as you move forward with your dog. When stopping, say "halt" about 3 steps before you intend to stop. Your dog should be taught to "sit" whenever you come to a stop.



Teach your dog to STAY and to COME: Your dog should be on its leash for this lesson. Teach your dog to STAY by first commanding it to SIT. When it sits, tell it to STAY as you slowly back away from the dog (leave the leash hanging loosely between you and the dog). At first your dog will not understand and it will try to follow you. Each time the dog gets up to follow you, take it back to the same spot where you first told it to stay. Make it sit again and then repeat the STAY command. Back a few steps away (as far as the length of your leash) and then tell the dog to COME. The dog may not want to come at first. Lightly pull the leash while repeating the COME command. When the dog comes to you, tell it to SIT. After it sits, pat it and praise it for doing as asked.

When your dog has learned to SIT, STAY and COME, practice without a leash. BE SURE that you practice this in a fenced yard or safe place where your dog cannot run away onto a street or other dangerous place. Take your time teaching the dog to stay and come. If the dog starts to disobey and run away, practice on a leash or long rope again. If your dog learns that it can easily run away if it wants to, it will be very hard to train it to obey you when you ask it to come.

There are more tricks, tasks and commands that can be taught to your dog. Borrow library books about dog training and find out more about this subject. BUT, the best way to train your dog is in an obedience class where the dog will learn to concentrate on your commands even though it is busy and noisy.

EXERCISE:

Dogs need exercise to stay in shape. Very small dogs may get most of the exercise that they need while running around indoors. Play fetch using a soft toy or ball which you can toss down a hallway several times to give the dog exercise. Larger dogs will need more exercise. They will need to be walked often. You should plan on walking your dog at least once a day. The amount of exercise will depend on the dog. Younger dogs need lots of exercise. Older dogs will need slower exercise and should not be taken too far from home if they are very old or in poor health. If your dog is not in good shape, slowly build up its condition by walking a little farther each day. Don't do a lot of running if the dog isn't in good condition. Build up to it slowly. Try to find games that your dog likes to play. Dogs can be taught to catch a ball or a frisbee for exercise.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Keep your dog's yard very clean. Dog droppings should be removed often. If you walk your dog in a city or town, there may be laws that tell you to "Stoop and Scoop" when your dog does its business on city property (i.e. along the side of the road).

HEALTH CARE:

- * Vaccinations are necessary for all dogs, even if they live inside most of the time. Talk to your veterinarian about what vaccinations your dog needs. It is important to have your dog vaccinated against RABIES, for your own protection as well as your dog's.
- * Worming: Speak to your veterinarian about worming your dog. He/she will probably recommend that you bring a sample of your dog's droppings in for examination for worms. A worming medication can then be given. Your veterinarian will probably recommend testing for "Heartworm". This requires a blood test. If the dog tests 'negative' (does not have the worm), it will be given heartworm medication (pills) during the mosquito season (mosquitoes spread heartworm in dogs).
- * Check your dog's ears and clean them often using cotton balls and mineral or baby oil. If they become irritated (your dog scratches at the inside of the ear with a hind foot) ask your veterinarian to examine the ears.
- * Watch for fleas or ticks. Dogs will scratch when irritated by external parasites. Use a flea collar, dust with flea powder or spray, or wash with dog shampoo made to kill fleas. You may have to dust the dog's sleeping area with flea powder as well. Repeat treatments are often necessary because flea treatments only kill adult fleas, not their eggs. The eggs can hatch in a week or two and cause a new outbreak of fleas.

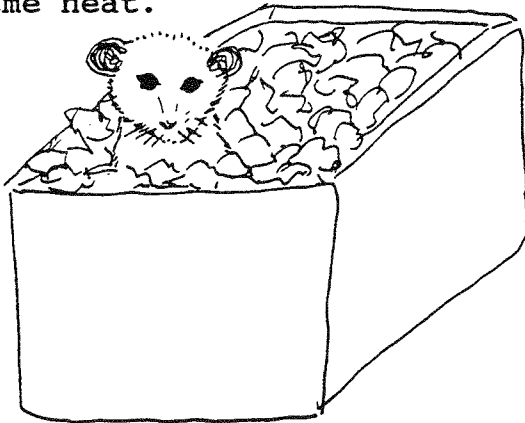
FERRETS

Ferrets are small active animals that are becoming very popular as pets in Canada. Their care requirements are quite similar to those of the small rodents. But, their feeding requirements are quite different because they are carnivores (meat eaters). They are small in size making them easy to handle. They are strong and sturdy so they make good playmates. Dogs and cats will usually accept a ferret as a new member of the family.

For centuries, ferrets have been kept for hunting rabbits and other small animals. This may be an important point to think about if you also keep mice, birds or other small pets.

HOUSING:

Ferrets should have a comfortable cage where they can be kept for their own safety. A rabbit cage can be used for a ferret, but the rabbit feeder should be removed and the feeding slot blocked off. Be sure that there are no cracks or openings that the ferret can squeeze out through. The cage door should close tightly with a latch that the ferret cannot open from the inside. If the cage has a solid floor, this should be covered with wood shavings. If it has a wire mesh floor, the cage should have a nest box filled with shavings where the ferret can sleep. Do not place ferret cages in direct sunlight or in a very warm place because they cannot live in extreme heat.



A NEST BOX FULL OF
SHAVINGS MAKES A
COMFORTABLE PLACE
TO BURROW IN FOR
A SLEEP.

FEEDING:

Ferrets are carnivores (meat eaters) like the cat and dog. Although they look much like a small rodent, they cannot eat a ration like rabbit food which is made of grains and hay. Ferrets can be fed a special food made for ferrets and mink which can be bought at most pet stores. They can also be fed cat or dog foods which are mostly meat. The recommended protein content of food for ferrets is 35%. Food should be fed in a small dish which can be removed from the cage and cleaned every day. Water should be provided in a small bowl or in a water bottle dispenser.

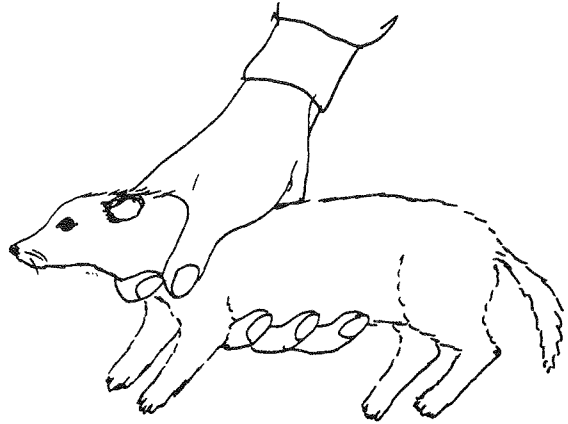
CARE:

Keep all food and water containers very clean. Keep bedding in cages clean and dry.

HANDLING:

Give your new ferret time to settle into his or her new home. Before trying to pick up a new ferret, you should put your hand into the cage for a minute or two so that the ferret can look at and smell your hand. If the ferret does not seem afraid, you may try to pick it up.

Place the palm of your hand over the ferret's shoulders and then put your thumb and index finger around its neck. Your other three fingers should go under the ferret's body behind its front legs. You may place your other hand under the hind end of a heavy ferret to help support its weight.



EXERCISE:

Ferrets enjoy playing with many toys and like to chase moving objects such as a rolling ball or a toy pulled along by a string. They like to climb over, under and inside of things because they are very curious creatures. But, sometimes this can get them into a great deal of trouble! Ferrets may climb into an appliance such as a dishwasher or clothes dryer when the door is opened. They might end up being trapped inside an appliance which is in operation. This could result in injury or death for your pet. Ferrets also like to explore any "tunnels" that they come across. Open heating ducts or floor drains can become dangerous traps for your pet. If you take your ferret outside to play, do not let it escape because it can easily become lost.

HEALTH:

Ferrets can catch many of the same illnesses that bother cats and dogs. Your ferret should be vaccinated against rabies and canine distemper each year. Ferrets can get internal parasites (worms) like many other animals. Your veterinarian can help you plan vaccinations and worming treatments for your pet. Ferrets can also get fleas, but any cat flea powder can be used to control this problem.

Unless you intend to breed ferrets (best left to the experts), you should have your pet neutered. This will help to prevent some health and behavior problems. Talk to your veterinarian for more information.

GOATS

Goats are lively, playful animals which make very good companions. They enjoy a great deal of activity and respond well to affection. Goats can learn numerous tricks and like to go for walks with their owners. They do not require expensive food and their housing can be quite plain. They come in several breeds, all of which are accustomed to the climate in Ontario.

HOUSING:

Goats can be kept in a small, draft-free shed or a corner of a barn or garage. One goat needs about 25 square feet of stall space. A 2 by 2 meter stall would be alright for a goat which also is allowed outside for exercise. Goats do not need a heated barn, but they should not be kept where a strong draft of wind can blow on them. In the winter, it is best to have good deep bedding of straw to keep the animals warm.

Goats like to go outside in nice weather. They should have a small fenced yard or pasture where they can go for exercise. Otherwise, they should be walked for several minutes each day. Goats should not be tethered (tied to a stake) because they could be attacked by stray animals while tied.

EQUIPMENT:

You should have a collar on your goat when walking the animal. Collars are best made of plastic link chains, and are sold at most feed store and livestock supply companies. These collars will break away if they become snagged on a fence (to prevent choking). Goats should have a hay feeder which is placed off the ground (so that they don't get their feet into the feed). Hay feeders should also be constructed so that the animal cannot put its head in and out of the feeder too easily. This keeps goats from grabbing hay and pulling it out onto the ground where it will be wasted. A feeder with slats that only allow the animals nose to touch the hay is best. Grain is usually fed in a bowl while the animal is out for milking, if it is a milking doe (female goat).

SELECTION:

Choose a female goat or a castrated (neutered) male goat. Uncastrated males, called bucks, do not make good pets as they grow to be very strong and aggressive. Bucks also have a strong musky odor in the fall and winter. Goats are naturally horned, but a pet goat should have its horns removed while very young (for your safety as well as the goat's). It is best to choose a goat about 3 months of age which is weaned from its mother's milk. A young goat will quickly learn to be friendly.

HANDLING:

Goats are usually led by the collar when shown. They can also be led on a leash. To restrain a goat for hoof trimming, clipping, etc., tie its collar up short to a ring on the wall (about two feet above the floor). The animal may then be pressed against the wall to hold it still while trimming is completed. If a goat is milking, it is usually milked on a milking stand. A milking stand is a platform about 45 to 50 cm above the floor. It has a slot to put the goat's head through and a bar (stanchion) to close beside its neck to keep the animal from moving about while being milked. A grain bowl is usually located where the animal can eat while being milked. Hoof trimming and other tasks can also be done while the animal is on the milking stand.

FEEDING:

Water: Should be available at all times.

Hay: Should be available at all times or fed in the morning and the evening (1 flake per feeding).

Grain: Non-milking goats should receive about 225 grams of grain per day. Grain should be a 16% Non-Urea Dairy Ration for cows. It could also be a Sheep ration for dry sheep or feeder lambs.

Minerals: A trace mineral salt lick should be available at all times.

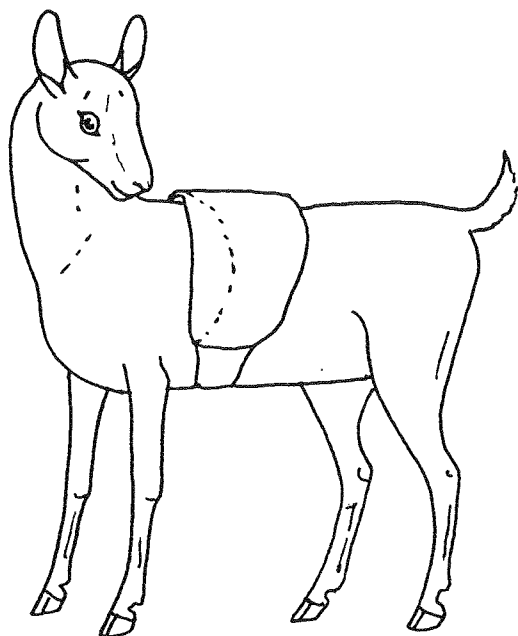
GROOMING:

Goat hooves should be trimmed once a month. Use rose pruning shears or a hoof knife. Trim hoof wall away until it is even with the goat's sole. Trim heel even with sole if it becomes overgrown. Goats enjoy being brushed. Use a horse "body brush" to brush your goat. Brush in the direction that the hair grows. Goats may be washed in the summer time although it is not often needed. Wash with warm water (on a warm day). Use a small amount of livestock shampoo or human hair shampoo. Rinse well after washing. Towel dry the goat and keep it out of cool, breezy areas until completely dry.



TRAINING:

Goats are very smart and can learn a large number of tricks and tasks. Goats should be taught to walk on a lead. They can also be taught to go for walks if you begin working with them at a very young age. When kids are young, they like to run beside anyone who runs near them. You can encourage your goat to run with you by running a short distance and then stopping to wait for it to catch



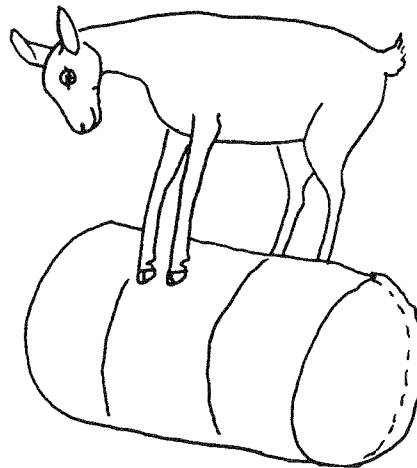
up. Very soon it will run along beside you wherever you go. You can then go for long walks with your goat. You can even make or buy a pack sack for your goat so that it can carry camping gear or picnic supplies. Buy a pack sack made for a dog (available at many sporting goods stores or some pet shops). You can make a pack sack by sewing two cloth sacks onto a band which goes around the animal's body right behind its front legs. The sacks should be located so that one sits on each side of the animal's body near the top of its back.

Your goat should have a name and you should use the name whenever you talk to your goat. It will learn to come when called.

You can also teach a goat to shake hands by reaching down and picking up its front foot and shaking it. Pat the goat afterwards. Do this several times a day for a few days. Soon the goat will shake hands with you as soon as you reach towards its front leg.

EXERCISE:

Goats love to run and jump. Their yard should have several obstacles which they can climb on. A clean, empty oil drum lying on its side is a good toy. Old spools that held heavy cables, etc. make good toys for climbing. If you have old tree stumps in the pen, a sturdy board can be nailed from one stump to the next for the goats to walk on. Goats like any kind of ramp which they can run up and down and they will keep busy doing this for hours.



Goats also love to go for walks. You should try to take them for a good long walk at least two or three times a week.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Keep the goat's pen clean and dry. Be sure that you use lots of bedding (straw) in the wintertime to prevent it from becoming cold and damp. A goat pen is cleaned out in the same way as a pony's pen (see section on ponies).

HEALTH CARE:

Goats are usually vaccinated for tetanus once a year. They may also be vaccinated for other clostridial diseases such as enterotoxemia (consult with your veterinarian about this).

- * Most health problems occur from sudden changes in feeds or from poor sanitation in the barn.
- * Colds and pneumonia will happen in winter if the barn area is too damp, ventilation is poor, or the barn is overcrowded.
- * Hoof problems develop if the goat's pen or exercise yard is too wet or the stall is dirty.
- * External parasites: Goats are usually dusted with a "rotenone" flea powder 2 or 3 times in winter.
- * Internal parasites: Goats can get worms so a veterinarian should be consulted about a worming program.

PONIES & HORSES

Ponies and horses can be very devoted pets. They are also useful because they can be taught to pull a cart or be ridden. They come in numerous breeds, colours, markings and sizes. They require quite a bit of care so you should be prepared to work hard if you want to keep a pony or horse.

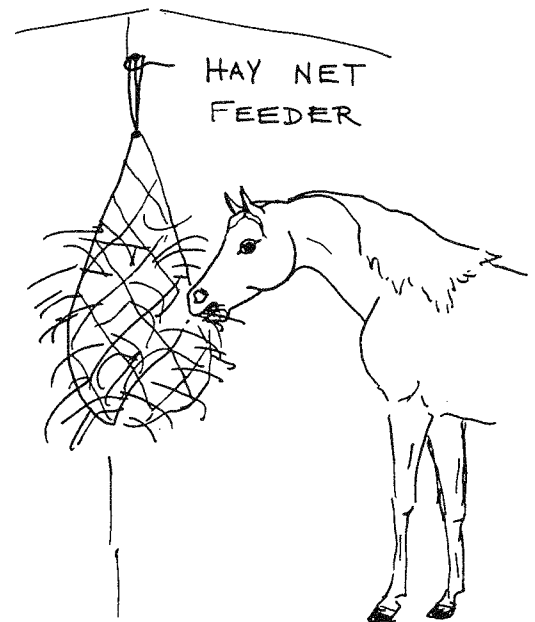
HOUSING:

A pony or horse should have a shed or barn to live in. They can be kept in a fenced yard with a three-sided shelter open to the south. It is better to have a stall in a barn because this is usually easier to keep clean. A horse or pony may be kept in a box stall (a large stall which the animal can be let loose in), or a standing stall (a narrower stall where the animal is tied to the manger at the front of the stall). A box stall should be approximately 3 metres by 3 metres for a pony, 3 metres by 3.5 metres for a small horse, and 3.5 by 3.5 metres for a larger horse. It should have a hay feeder in one corner or a place to hang up a hay net. A standing stall should be approximately 1.5 metres wide for ponies and 1.8 metres wide for horses. The stall should be between 3 to 3.5 metres deep depending on the size of the horse or pony. Standing stalls should never be used for horses or ponies that kick (these animals do not make good pets).

Stall floors may be of concrete, brick, asphalt, wood, clay or sand. Sometimes rubber mats are used over concrete, asphalt or wood. The floor should give support but not be too firm. The surface should be smooth but not slippery. It should also drain well. The harder the surface the more bedding it requires.

EQUIPMENT:

Stalls should have either a hay net to hold hay, or a hay rack in one corner. Water buckets should be made of rubber, never metal. Horses will often crush a water bucket against the wall and a metal bucket will then become a sharp object which can hurt the horse. The large rubber grain tubs available at most feed stores are ideal for feeding grain. Stalls should be equipped with a salt lick holder mounted at the horse's head height. Standing stalls should have a hay manger at the front of the stall. A tie rope should be attached to the manger to slip the horse's halter to. The tie rope should be just long enough to allow the horse to lie with its head on the bedding directly below the manger (not too long or the horse can become tangled in the rope).



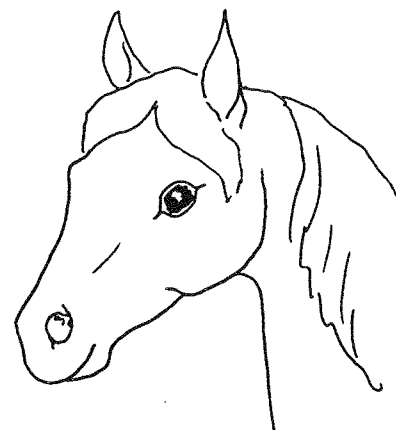
SELECTION:

For a beginning horse owner, the emphasis should be on choosing a horse or pony which is very gentle and well-broken. The size of the animal is not so important. A very gentle, well-behaved large pony or horse may be a better choice than a very high-spirited small pony. Remember that if you are still growing you could quickly outgrow a small pony. When you have chosen a pony or horse which seems suitable, a veterinarian should check the horse for any possible illness or lameness before the purchase is made final.

HANDLING:

Horses and ponies should be handled with great care. Always remember that even a well-trained horse is a very powerful animal if it becomes frightened. This is why it is so important to pay attention to the horse at all times. Learn to recognize the signs a horse gives when it is frightened or angry.

Horses are usually handled from their left side. This is an old tradition which is still in use today. When leading a horse, walk on its left side with your right arm stretched out to your right holding the lead shank close to the horse's halter. This will prevent the horse from walking behind you and stepping on the back of your foot or leg. The lead shank may be snapped to the bottom ring on the halter. Horses are saddled and bridled from the left side as well. It would be a good idea to have someone who has worked with horses show you exactly how to work around the horse as you groom it, lead it, put tack on, and ride the horse.



NORMAL GENTLE FACE



DANGER - ANGRY OR FRIGHTENED.
NOTE: - EARS BACK AGAINST NECK.
- WHITES OF EYES SHOWING.
- FLARED, WRINKLED NOSTRILS

FEEDING:

- Water: Should be available at all times. Remember to cool down a hot horse before giving it access to unlimited water.
- Hay: A good quality grass or mixed hay should be fed twice a day. A small pony may need only one flake of hay per feeding. A horse will need about two flakes per feeding. Hay should be fed before grain to allow time for the grain to digest properly.
- Grain: A grain mixture made for horses is ideal. The amount of grain fed will vary greatly depending on the size of the horse or pony, as well as the amount of work the animal does. A pony which is only ridden occasionally will need

much less grain than a pony which is worked hard by its rider for one or two hours a day.

Minerals: Ponies and horses should have access to a trace mineral salt lick at all times.

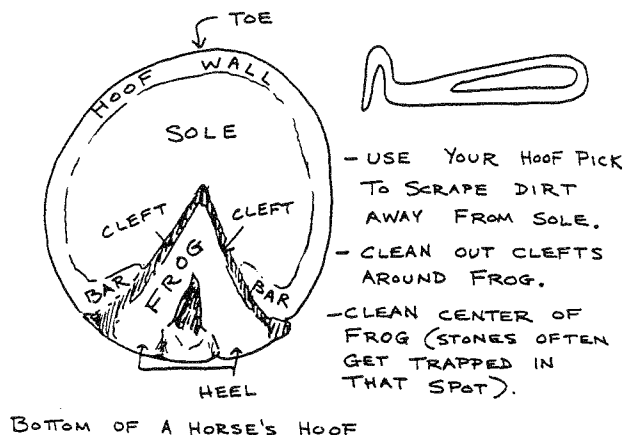
Treats: Slices of apple or long strips of carrot make a good treat. Do not feed whole apples or carrots as these can be swallowed whole and may cause choking.

GROOMING:

Horses should be tied while being groomed. In a stable which has an alley, cross ties are usually attached to the wall on either side of the aisle. The horse is positioned in the center of the alley and the cross ties are clipped to its halter on each side. If there is no alley, horses may be left tied in a standing stall while being groomed. They may also be left in a box stall, but a lead shank should be clipped to the wall to keep the horse from turning around while it is groomed and saddled.

Grooming is usually begun by picking up each of the horse's hooves and cleaning them out using a hoof pick. The hooves of a horse that is kept in a stall most of the time should be cleaned daily. The groove in the center and on either side of the frog is cleaned out, then the bottom of the hoof is scraped clean with the side of the pick. Grooming of the horse's coat begins with an oval-shaped hard rubber curry comb. This is rubbed in a circular motion on the horse's coat. Start at the neck and work towards the back of the animal on one side and then repeat on the other side. Hold a strong bristled dandy brush in both

hands and brush firmly in the same direction as the hair growth to remove loose hair, dust, dry skin, etc. The entire animal is brushed with the dandy brush. The shorter bristled body brush is then brushed over the animal to make it shine. The horse's head is brushed using the body brush. A mane and tail comb is used to comb the long hair of the mane and tail. Begin combing from the bottom upwards towards the roots. Horses are occasionally washed in warm weather. Never wash a horse on a cold, windy day. Use tepid (lukewarm) water and mix in a mild livestock shampoo. Using a large sponge, wet the horse down. A water brush (like a soft long-bristled brush) is used to brush dirt out from the horse's coat. After this is done, tepid rinse water should then be used to wash off soap lather. A sweat scraper blade is then pressed across the horse's coat in long gentle strokes to remove excess water. The horse should then be walked about until its coat is completely dried. Do not put a damp horse away in the barn.



TRAINING:

Training of the horse or pony is best handled by someone who has experience at this. Horses learn bad habits very quickly and they have a hard time re-learning the right way to do something. Training of horses is a slow process and every step should be learned completely before the next step is begun. Do not let a horse get away with bad behaviour for any reason. Horses are very strong so they must always think that humans are in control or they will learn that they can disobey. For example: When you are out riding, you should never let a horse get into the habit of grabbing bites of grass here and there as you ride along. Before long, the horse will soon learn that it can stop and eat anytime it feels like doing so, even if you don't want it to.

EXERCISE:

Horses can be given a great deal of exercise. However, you must get the horse used to exercise if it has not been ridden much for a while. Begin slowly and build up the horse's endurance by adding a little more work each day. Horses should have time to relax out on pasture at least two or three times a week. Horses may be worked by using a lunge or long line. The horse is allowed to walk, trot and canter in a large circle around the person holding the line. Horses should be worked in both directions to develop even muscles on both sides of the animal.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

A horse's stall should be cleaned every day. All manure should be removed along with any damp bedding. Fresh, dry straw should be put down to replace any wet bedding which was removed. The stall should be completely cleaned out at least twice a week. The stall floor may then be scrubbed down with a disinfectant wash to remove odour.

HEALTH CARE:

- * Horses should receive a tetanus vaccination once a year. A rabies vaccination might also be needed.
- * Horses should be examined every 6 to 12 months by your veterinarian to see if the teeth need floating. Floating is another word for filing which is done to remove sharp edges on teeth.
- * Hooves should be trimmed every 4 to 8 weeks. Horseshoes may be necessary if the horse is ridden on hard pavement or on very rocky ground. Talk to a farrier in your area about regular hoof care.
- * If you show your horse or pony, you will probably need a blood test known as a Coggins Test done each year before show season. A certificate is issued indicating that the horse is Negative on the Coggins Test.
- * Most health problems may be avoided by proper feeding and sanitation. Do not change feeds suddenly. Do not turn horses out full time onto new pasture until they have had several days to gradually adjust to the pasture (turn them out a few more minutes each day).
- * Talk to your veterinarian about controlling parasites.

RABBITS

Rabbits make good pets because they are gentle and quiet. They come in a wide range of colours, sizes and types. There are large breeds which are usually kept for meat production, and there are small "miniature" breeds such as the Netherlands Dwarf or the Mini-Lop which are very small and are ideal pets. Rabbits can live either indoors or outdoors.

HOUSING:

Rabbits may be kept in an outside hutch. Most small hutches for one or two rabbits are made like a wooden box with a door in one side. The box is attached to a wire cage which the rabbit can go into to get exercise. Some hutches are also large cages with a wire floor and a wire front with a wooden back and sides to provide shelter. The rabbit may have a nesting box and hay feeder within the cage. Regardless of the type of hutch, it should have a weatherproof roof to keep the rabbits dry.

Rabbits may also be housed indoors. They may be kept in a garage or even in the house. Rabbits like the temperature of their housing to be 16°-20°C so they should be kept in a cool room if they are in the house. They are usually kept in a wire cage. If you do keep your rabbit indoors, let it out into the house for exercise but be very careful that it doesn't eat something that it shouldn't. If you do not do this, you should have an outdoor exercise area made.

Outdoor exercise areas may be made by building a large cage from poultry fencing which has small holes. The cage should have a mesh floor to prevent the rabbit from digging its way out. If the cage is constructed with a wooden frame, it can be moved around on the grass to provide a clean spot for grazing each day. If you put your rabbit into an exercise pen, be sure that it is not put into direct sunlight (remember that the sun and shade change during the day). Rabbits should have access to water at all times, even when in their exercise pen.

EQUIPMENT:

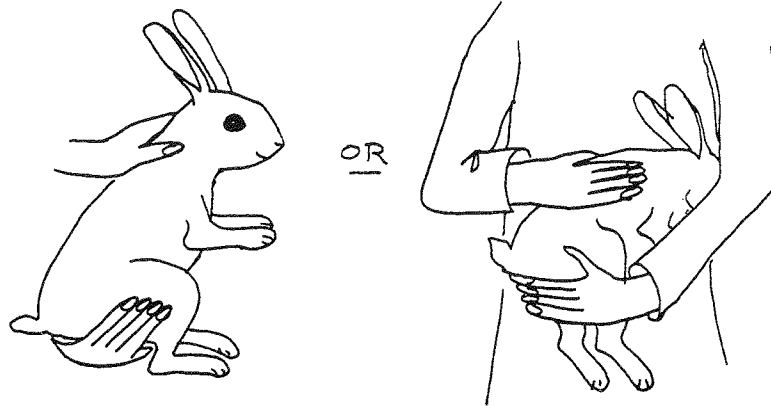
Nesting boxes are necessary for breeding animals. A wire brush is used to brush off manure or matted hair which sticks to the cages.

SELECTION:

Choose rabbits carefully to avoid health problems. Most well known breeders are good sources for pets. Be sure that your pet does not have a runny nose, watery eyes, wet paws (all symptoms of "Snuffles", a serious health problem in rabbits). The rabbit may also appear normal and still be carrying the disease. If you are buying a young rabbit, you should try to see the parents. This will give you an idea of how large the rabbit will grow. Some rabbits weigh less than a kilogram, while some weigh over four to five kilograms.

HANDLING:

Rabbits should be grasped by the loose skin over the shoulder area. Your other hand should be slid underneath the rabbit to support the weight of its body. Lift the rabbit and hold it against your body. You can carry it with its head under your arm and its body pressed against your side with your arm supporting its weight. Do not pick rabbits up by their ears or legs. Rabbits may be restrained by placing them on a flat surface and then firmly pressing their body down (as a cat would be restrained). If the rabbit struggles wildly relax the pressure so it won't get hurt.



FEEDING:

Water: Should be available at all times. Use a simple automatic watering feeder which has either a water cup or a water nipple.

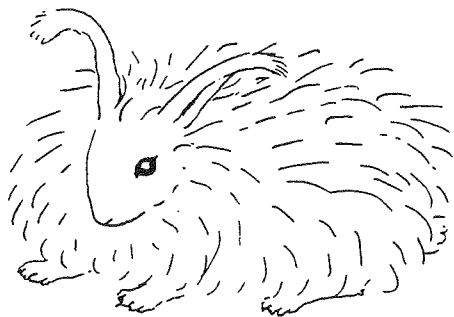
Food: Feed commercial rabbit pellets. Rabbits also enjoy hay, especially alfalfa. Rabbits may have small amounts of green feeds such as grass, lettuce, carrots, carrot tops, etc. Be sure that you don't give a rabbit too much green feed. You must be extra careful if you put the rabbit out on the grass in its exercise cage as it might eat too much grass. Place a flat board beneath most of the cage to limit the area which the rabbit may graze on. Don't be surprised if you see your rabbit eating its feces. This is normal and it helps the rabbit digest food.

Minerals: Salt spools may be made available, but commercial feeds contain all necessary minerals.

GROOMING:

Keep a rabbit's nails trimmed short so that it can't scratch you when you are handling it. Use nail clippers used for cats and dogs. Many rabbits have dark coloured claws so use extra care when trimming these nails. Rabbits may be brushed with a soft brush or just by running your hands in the same direction as the fur growth (this will remove loose hair). Slightly dampened hands will improve brushing. A soft cloth is often used to brush the hair and add shine before showing.

ANGORA RABBITS ARE
VERY PRETTY,
BUT THEY MUST BE
PLUCKED AND GROOMED
VERY OFTEN!



Angora rabbits (which are kept for their hair production), should be plucked regularly. If you do not pluck them, they will lick and swallow their hair and get hairballs. You should only own an Angora if you are willing to pluck them often. (Hairballs: Any type of rabbit can develop hairballs. Fresh roughage such as hay in the diet will help to prevent hairballs.)

TRAINING:

- * Rabbits may be taught to come when called by name or whistling. Reward them with a treat when they come to you.
- * They may also be trained to sit quietly where you place them. Gently move them back into position after you have set them on a table and position them as you wish (this is done to prepare a rabbit for showing).
- * Rabbits can be taught to stand up on their hind legs to be given a treat. This is done by calling the rabbit's name and then holding the treat about a foot above the rabbit's head.



LITTER TRAINING:

Rabbits can be trained to use a kitty litter box. Keep the rabbit in a cage or other small area. Place a low litter box in the cage. The rabbit will probably begin to use this litter box. When you see that it has learned to use the box, you may let your rabbit roam loose in your house (if you don't have other pets that will harm it!!!). If it does not use its box, confine it in a small area again until it learns what you wish it to do. Rabbits can become good house pets if they learn to use a litter box.

EXERCISE:

Rabbits should receive lots of exercise. You may put your rabbit in an exercise pen, or you may let it run loose in the house. Be sure that other pets or animals cannot harm your rabbit when it is out of its cage. Rabbits will become quite playful if they are handled often and they like to play "hide and seek" games once they are very tame. Do not treat a rabbit roughly during play or it will become very nervous of being handled.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Keep a rabbit's cage very clean. A build up of manure and urine will cause many different health problems. Clean the cage by brushing it with a wire brush to remove any manure or hair. You may then wash the cage with a bleach and water mixture while brushing with wire brush again. All nesting boxes should be kept clean and edges sanded so that the mother will not get splinters on her udder. This could lead to an infection called mastitis which affects the milk.

HEALTH CARE:

- * No vaccinations usually needed.
- * Most health problems are avoided by keeping the cage very clean. Rabbits can get "Sore Hock" (sores on the hind feet and legs) from being overweight, being kept on a wire floor and being kept on a dirty floor. Wire floor can also cause cuts to rabbit's feet (which can then become infected). It is a good idea to put a 3.5 metre by 3.5 metre piece of plywood in the cage for the rabbit to sit on when resting.
- * Ear mites can be a problem. They cause crusty brown discharge in the rabbit's ears. The ears should be treated several times with an ear mite solution. OR Clean ear with mineral oil. Isolate infected rabbits because they can infect other rabbits.
- * Snuffles is a disease which causes runny nose, sneezing, difficult breathing and runny eyes. The hair on the front feet becomes wet and matted. This disease cannot be treated successfully so it is important to buy animals which do not have the problem. (Snuffles will be present in most rabbitries, but it is usually only a serious problem when animals become stressed -- avoid buying a rabbit which has had this problem because it doesn't go away once the animal has become sick with it).
- * Male rabbits may spray urine, bite, stamp their feet and have a strong odour. Castrating the rabbit will eliminate these problems.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Reptiles and amphibians are interesting creatures. They are quiet and do not take up much space. The largest problem with keeping them is that they often require unusual food which may be hard to provide.

Reptiles: Include turtles, tortoises, snakes, lizards, crocodiles and alligators.

Amphibians: Include frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts.



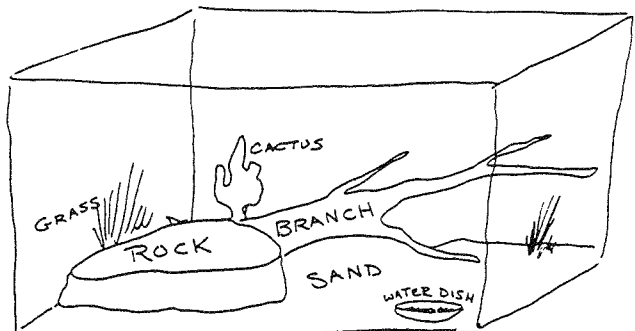
NOTE: Turtles should not be kept as pets. They were common as pets at one time, but they were responsible for outbreaks of disease in humans. Although they can be fun to watch, it is best that you not choose a turtle as a pet.

NOTE: BEFORE YOU CHOOSE ONE OF THESE ANIMALS.... Find out all about its care. You will have to build the proper "habitat" for it to live in. You will have to learn how to feed it. Some reptiles and amphibians will only eat live food such as insects, worms, fish or small rodents. You should know this before you bring the new animal home. If it will be a problem to find insects in the winter time, you should not choose a pet that needs these to stay alive.

HOUSING:

The best housing for reptiles or amphibians is a glass or plastic aquarium. This will be waterproof and escape-proof. The aquarium should have a cover made from a wooden frame with a piece of strong aluminum screen nailed or stapled to it (you may want to weight this down with something like a small rock). It is very important that the reptile's or amphibian's home be made into a proper "habitat". It should be as close as possible to its home in the wild. Some of these creatures are used to "desert living" with sand, cactus and rocks. Some are used to "forest living" where there would be moist soil covered by ferns and moss and dead logs to climb over. Others are "semi-aquatic" which means that they like to go in and out of shallow water and sit on stones or sand surrounded by water plants. Here are some tips about fixing up different types of habitats:

Desert habitat: Put a few inches of sand into your aquarium. Add pieces of rock and small stones as landscaping. Pieces of dry weathered wood will make interesting places for the reptile to lie when resting. Small cactus plants will

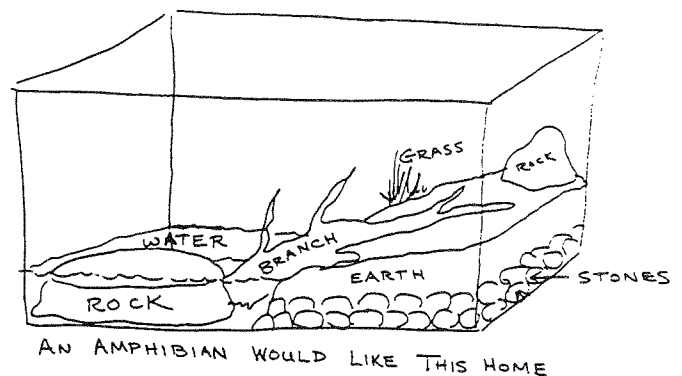


A REPTILE WOULD LIKE THIS HOME

add colour and interest to the aquarium. Plants should be left in their flowerpots and the flowerpots set down into the sand. This is because the reptile may decide to dig down into the sand and it will uproot the cactus and break its roots if it is planted directly into the sand.

Forest habitat: Put a few inches of sand into an aquarium. You can cover this with a thin layer of filter charcoal to keep the sand fresh smelling. Cover this with an inch or two of top soil (you may want to buy sterilized soil which does not have bugs or weeds in it). Plant some forest plants such as ferns and mosses. You might like to put in tropical plants from a plant store rather than collecting plants from the wild. Plants should be left in their little pots and placed down into the earth (because of burrowing by the creatures). Little sticks or rocks with moss or lichens on them are also good. Keep the soil moist at all times so that the plants stay healthy.

Semi-aquatic: Make a forest habitat as above but set a tray or bowl which is about 3 inches deep into the earth in the aquarium. Put some small stones in the bottom of the tray. Fill the tray with water. Place a rock or stick into the tray of water and make a ramp that leads out of the water to the earth. The turtle, frog or salamander can then climb out onto the earth when it wants to.



Another way to fix up the aquarium is to set a tray (20 to 100 cm deep) along one side. Fill the other side with small stones or gravel. Put some earth and plants on top of this. Fill the tray with water. Make some type of ramp with rocks or wood to lead up onto the soil. Keep your aquarium in a place which is not too cold or too hot. Do not allow direct sunlight to shine right onto the aquarium.

EQUIPMENT:

A little L-shaped stick for catching snakes. No other special equipment necessary.

SELECTION:

As mentioned before, find out everything you can about the type of reptile or amphibian you want. Base your decision on the type of care the animal requires. Most reptiles and amphibians are available from pet stores. Some (like frogs, snakes or salamanders) may be caught in the wild.

HANDLING:

Always wash your hands well after handling your pet or something in its habitat.

Reptiles and Amphibians should not be handled often. Amphibians will lose moisture from their skin from handling. Snakes should be picked up by placing an L-shaped stick gently on the neck just behind where the head ends. You may then pick the snake up by holding its neck just behind the head (be very gentle). Always support the weight of the snake's body with your other hand.

Frogs & Toads: Gently pick them up inside your cupped hand. Be careful that they do not leap from your hand to the floor (they will get injured).

Lizards and Salamanders: Pick up by their body (gently). Salamanders should be handled as little as possible. Some lizards have a tendency to bite... get to know your lizard and watch out for his jaws if he does like to snap sometimes.

NOTE: Don't carry these creatures around with you. They are fragile and should not be handled more than needed. Don't use them to scare your friends. The creature may get knocked out of your hand and fall to the floor where it will be injured or run away in fear.

FEEDING:

Feeding of reptiles and amphibians is very specialized. Borrow library books about these creatures and find out what they like to eat. Many will only eat live insects, worms, frogs or mice. Bait shops or fishing supply stores might have worms year round. Insects and worms are often available from pet shops. Some meat eating reptiles or amphibians will eat chopped pieces of meat if you hold the meat up and wiggle it around in front of them. Some reptiles and amphibians like to nibble on plants, fruit or vegetables.

Water should be available at all times. Many of these creatures get the water they need by licking at damp plants. It is a good idea to have a little bottle with a pump sprayer and spray water on the plants to "mist" them every day. Keep a little flat tray (such as a jar lid) in the aquarium with snakes or lizards. Creatures kept in a semi-aquatic aquarium will get their water from their little "pond".

GROOMING:

None needed.

TRAINING:

You can train most reptiles and amphibians to take food from your hand.

EXERCISE:

None necessary.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Remove uneaten foods (other than live) regularly and replace with fresh food to prevent spoilage and pollution. Replant plants which have been dug up or turned over by burrowing creatures. Add fresh water to the the semi-aquatic aquarium when needed.

HEALTH CARE:

- * Many health problems are due to poor management. The colour of the animal is a good clue to its health.
- * No vaccinations necessary.
- * The main way to keep reptiles and amphibians healthy is by:
 - providing the proper kind of habitat (see housing).
 - providing the proper kinds of foods (see feeding).
 - keeping the temperature and humidity comfortable for your kind of pet.

SMALL RODENTS

Small rodents include mice, rats, gerbils, hamsters, and guinea pigs. Domestic (tame) rodents make excellent pets because they are quiet, gentle, and easy to care for.



Fancy Mice: Mice are one of the smallest of the rodent family. Pet mice have a very wide variety of coat colours. They are active animals which enjoy playing in a cage filled with obstacles. They do like to bite so be careful. The mouse produces more odour than other rodents.

Fancy Rats: Are larger than mice and also have a wide variety of coat colours. They are intelligent and affectionate as well as active.

Hamsters: A variety of colours and lengths of hair coats. They tend to be less active than mice, rats and gerbils. They are nocturnal which means they sleep during the day and are awake at night. Of the rodents kept as pets, the hamster is most likely to bite, especially females.

Gerbils: Are light brown with white markings. They move in short hops like a tiny kangaroo. They are very active animals which like to climb and play on obstacles in their cage especially in early morning and evening. They are very friendly and amusing.

Guinea Pigs or Cavies: Are the largest of the small pet rodents. Because of their size it is good to have an enclosed area that they can run in outside. They come in many interesting colours and have either smooth coats or long hairy coats like an Angora rabbit. They are quiet and gentle and not as active as mice, rats and gerbils. Guinea pigs can bother some allergies if you have any.

HOUSING:

Small rodents may be housed in either a cage or an aquarium. An aquarium is often better than a cage because the rodent cannot dig and scratch bedding out of it. As well, rodents housed in cages will often spend hours chewing the bars of the cage and making noise. An aquarium is warmer for the rodent. However, cages are also good for housing. Guinea pigs should have a cage with a solid floor. Wood, aluminum and soft plastics should not be used for hamster cages because the hamster can chew through them. Cages should be equipped so that they sit inside of a plastic tray (such as a kitty litter box) so that bedding does not become littered over the table the cage sits on. Cages or aquariums should have a small nest box (can be made of wood or plastic), especially if you want to breed your animals. Some companies now make containers especially for housing small rodents. Some of these containers even have clear plastic tunnels which the animals can climb up and down in.

The cage or aquarium should be located out of direct sun in a warm area of the house. If rodents are kept in a cold place, they will spend most of their time sleeping under a pile of bedding. Gerbils don't like high humidity and rats don't like low humidity.

EQUIPMENT:

Cages should be equipped with an automatic water bottle. The bottle has a small nipple on a water tube that allows water to trickle out when the animal puts its mouth against the nipple. They should also have an automatic feeder for seeds or other food. As the animal eats, the feeder automatically refills.

HAMSTER
HAVING A
DRINK AT
AUTOMATIC
WATER
BOTTLE.



SELECTION:

There is a wide variety of small rodents in many colours, shapes and haircoats. You may want to visit a pet store and watch the rodents for a while so that you will know which kind appeals to you most. Guinea pigs are quite a bit larger than the other small rodents and will require a little more food each day. You may also be able to get a small rodent from the biology lab or your school. Many times these animals are bred as projects and the extra offspring are sold for a small amount. Choose animals which are healthy looking and active. Watch the group of animals in a cage and choose one that is active and curious. This animal is more likely to make an interesting pet.

HANDLING:

Always put your hand into the cage slowly. Make sure the animal sees your hand before you touch the rodent. Disturbing a rodent when it is sleeping may cause it to bite at you.

Pet rodents should be taught to climb onto your hand and remain calm as they are picked up. Teach them this by placing your hand into the cage for a minute or two at a time. Because rodents are usually quite curious, it will only be a short while before your pet will climb onto your hand to have a better look. You may wish to put a little treat such as a small piece of lettuce on the palm of your hand to help attract the rodent's attention. When the rodent has learned to climb onto the palm of your hand, bring your hand out of the cage with the rodent sitting on it. Most rodents will not jump off of your hand once it is raised above the ground. You may want to cup your hand over the rodent if you feel it might be thinking about jumping from your hand.

Guinea pigs are usually a little large to be picked up on the palm of your hand. You may pick them up by gently placing both of your hands (palm up) on either side of the guinea pig and gently scooping the animal up onto your palms. Carry your guinea pig resting on your arm against your body. You should keep your other

hand against the side of the animal to keep it steady in case it should lose its footing.

Hamsters have lots of loose skin. They can be picked up holding all of the loose skin at the back of the neck.

Small rodents with tails may be picked up by grasping the base of the tail very close to the body with one hand. A gerbil can shed the end of its tail if it is picked up by the tail end. Lift the animal's hind end up slightly and slide your other hand underneath to support the animal's weight.



Most small rodents like to ride around on your shoulder or arm once they have been picked up. Move slowly and smoothly and be careful not to jar the animal so that it loses its footing. Falling from your shoulder would be much like you falling from a ten-story building. Guinea pigs, rats and hamsters are easily hurt by falls. So BE CAREFUL!

FEEDING:

Water: Should be available at all times in a small water bottle.

Food: Food for small rodents is available at a pet store. It will have small seeds, sunflower seeds and pelleted grain. Rodents also enjoy a bit of hay to munch on.

Vitamins: Guinea Pigs benefit from additional Vitamin C. This can be provided as liquid drops in the water supply. Do not use a metal waterer (glass or plastic is always better for use as a waterer).

Treats: Apple or carrot slices and greens such as lettuce or spinach are ideal treats. Guinea pigs like carrots and greens. Hamsters have a sweet tooth so be careful not to spoil it on only sweet food.

GROOMING:

Grooming is not necessary for most small rodents. They spend a great deal of time grooming themselves. Long-coated guinea pigs may be stroked with your hands to smooth their hair. The nails of a rodent may be lightly filed with an emery board if they become long and sharp, but this is unusual.

TRAINING:

Rodents usually aren't trained to do tricks. However, their natural behaviour can be fun to watch. Supply a rodent with objects such as a tread wheel, branches to climb, and an old paper tube from a roll of paper towels. Your pet can be quite entertaining as it plays on these.

Rodents can be taught to go through a maze if you wish to take the time to build one. Rodents will quickly learn their way through the maze if they know that there is a treat waiting for them at the end of the puzzle. Rats are very intelligent and do well in mazes.

EXERCISE:

Activities such as playing on a wheel or climbing on objects will provide exercise for a pet rodent.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE:

Cages should be kept bedded down with a 2.5 centimetres layer of cedar wood shavings. Gerbils like 15-20 centimetres of paper litter so they can burrow into it. These should be cleaned out completely at least once a week. Twice a week is even better. The cage may be scrubbed with a mild detergent and water, dried, and filled with fresh bedding again.

HEALTH CARE:

- * Rodents are not usually vaccinated. Their good health depends on keeping them in a warm, dry place with a clean cage. Avoid sudden changes in foods and temperatures.
- * A small rodent will often arch its back, keep its head low and stay in one spot when it is sick. Hamsters will become more aggressive.
- * Rodents are fussy about their grooming habits. Soiling around eyes, nose, rectum or abdomen often means a health problem.
- * Patchy hair loss and lots of scratching may mean mites.
- * The teeth of rodents grow continually. Check all the teeth regularly to make sure they aren't overgrown.