



ASSOCIATION OF SUGAR GLIDER VETERINARIANS™

Sugar Gliders: Should I get a male or a female?

Hi, my name is Dr. David Brust, and I've been a practicing exotic veterinarian for the last 25 years. I'm the author of "*Sugar Gliders: A Complete Veterinary Care Guide*" – and I'm also the president of the Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians.

The purpose of this video series is to cut through all the internet misinformation out there, and teach owners like you the best - veterinary-approved - ways to raise and care for sugar gliders.

Now, just to make sure we're all on the same page here, sugar gliders are also commonly known as "sugar bears" and "honey gliders" – and with that in mind, the goal of this video is to give you the real facts about the differences between owning a male and a female.

First off, for the average person it's pretty hard to tell the difference between a male and female sugar glider – especially if the male has been neutered. Probably the easiest way is that a non-neutered – or "intact" – adult male usually has a bald spot on its head, and another one on its chest. These are just the scent glands that they use to mark their territory – which also includes their females – and once they're neutered, these bald spots will usually fill right back in.

Now, intact males also have a large scrotum located just in front of where they go to the bathroom. With that in mind, one thing that male and female sugar gliders have in common is that their reproductive organs and rectum are all together in the same place – called a cloaca. This basically means that they urinate and defecate from the same place.

About the easiest way for the average owner to tell the difference between a female - and a neutered male - is by the female's pouch. Since they're marsupials, the females have a little pouch – just like a kangaroo – where they carry their young. It's located right about where a "belly button" would be – and it looks like a little slit.

Now, when it comes to the differences between males and females as house pets - as long as the male is neutered - there really aren't very many. For example, if a male sugar glider is not neutered, they will usually have a strong odor and mark their territory quite a bit once they enter puberty. However, for most people that's not really an issue because almost all reputable breeders only sell males that have already been neutered.

As far as the females go, they will "cycle" every 29 days – but there aren't normally any outward manifestations or spotting – so again, this really is not an issue.

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Now, having said all this, one of the most common questions I usually get from potential new owners is wondering if there are any personality differences between males and females. Well, I am constantly amazed at all the differing opinions on this – because some people will swear up and down that males are sweeter – and just as many people are absolutely sure that females make better pets.

In all honesty, having been a practicing Vet for the past 25 years now, it's been my experience – with almost any animal - that the real answer to this question has a lot more to do with the owners themselves – than it does the animal. Like any pet, every sugar glider has a slightly different personality, but as long as the owner spends enough time with them and properly trains them, they all pretty much end up with the same sweet, affectionate disposition. In other words, the amount of love you get out of an animal is usually directly in line with how much love you give them. 😊

Now, while we're still on the topic of people's personal opinions, I should probably also mention this. Most of the time, if you talk to somebody who's had sugar gliders, they'll either give you one of two stories. Either they're the best pet they've ever had – and they pull it out of their pocket and hand it to you – or they're just terrible, mean and nasty little animals that don't make good pets. It's been my experience that most of the time you're going to hear one extreme or the other – and not too many people in the middle.

Well, they both can't be right, so here's the truth. Again, it's usually a lot more about the owners – than the animal itself – and I can't stress that enough. The bottom line is that if the owner takes the time to properly bond with – and train – the animal, a sugar glider can be a wonderful pet. If they don't – it probably won't be. There's no mystery here, and from that standpoint – again - they're really fairly similar to a lot of other pets.

Honestly, where most people run into problems with sugar gliders is that there is so much misinformation out on the internet about them. In fact, like I've said on some of the other videos in this series, as a Vet who works with these animals every day – I am constantly amazed at the absolute garbage I read out there on sugar glider internet chat rooms and websites that are run by people who are supposedly “experts.”

Because of all this confusing information, a lot of people who have sugar gliders don't even know that there are better ways to feed or care for them properly. That's why over 90% of all the problems we Vets still see in sugar gliders every day usually go back to following poor diet and husbandry advice that people innocently got off some website or chat room.

This is one of the main reasons why the Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians has produced this series of short videos. The goal of this series is to give you enough quality, reliable information to make a good buying decision - and then only buy your animals from a licensed USDA breeder. A quality, USDA licensed breeder will already have a formal education program in place for their new moms & dads that includes lots of written material and videos – and they will show you exactly how to make your sugar glider a wonderful pet. 😊

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