



ASSOCIATION OF SUGAR GLIDER VETERINARIANS™

Sugar Glider Noises and Sounds – and what they mean

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 a little insight about the common sounds that these little guys can make – and what they mean.

Like we've discussed in other videos on cages and toys, healthy sugar gliders typically do not make any more – or less – noise than most other common house pets. The exception to this rule – again, like most other pets - are gliders that are not bonded with their owners, sick, malnourished, lonely, stressed or otherwise abused.

Under normal circumstances, sugar gliders are capable of making four primary types of sounds. They are chattering, barking, chirping, and sneezing.

Chattering (or crabbing) is usually the first sound that new owners hear from their gliders. It's a surprisingly loud, defensive noise that sounds a lot like a locust. Here's a sample of what typical crabbing sounds like.

The most common time when owners hear this noise is during the early stages of bonding with their baby – and it basically just means they're scared. Once a glider is well-bonded to humans, they will almost never make this sound unless they are suddenly startled or feel threatened by someone they don't know.

Crabbing is basically just one part of a big "tough guy" act that sugar gliders instinctively use to intimidate predators in the wild. Since they really don't have any other natural defenses, lots of times when they crab they will also stand up on their back legs – and swat or nip at the air while they are charging. The whole thing can be pretty intimidating if you aren't prepared for it – and in fact, that's one of the reasons they got the name sugar "bears" – because they look a lot like miniature grizzly bears when they are acting all big & tough.

For more information, go to: www.ASGV.org

© 2009 The Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians. All Rights Reserved

The thing you have to remember is that crabbing is just a big act – and like I said, about the only time they’ll ever do this is when they are babies and haven’t bonded to people yet. Almost all untrained sugar gliders have what we call a “Napoleon Complex”, and they will naturally use their little “grizzly bear act” to try and dominate their owners – and other house pets. The important thing is just not to let them intimidate you, and remember; you’re the boss! ☺

Barking is another sound that gliders can make – and it sounds surprisingly a lot like a Chihuahua. Typical barking sounds like this.

Now, when it comes to barking, some website and internet videos will try to tell you that they do this all the time – all night long. Well, as a practicing Veterinarian who has these little guys as my own personal pets in my home, I can tell you for a fact that this simply is not true.

The bottom line here is that a sugar glider’s bark – just like a canine’s bark – can mean a lot of different things. For example, while it’s true that they can bark if they are extremely bored or lonely – they can also bark to call their owners, to alert you to the presence of an intruder – or just purely out of excitement when they are playing.

Generally speaking, it’s been my experience that sugar gliders – just like dogs – usually won’t “bark” without a reason. For example, if you have a single sugar glider that’s housed all by itself - and it starts to bark at night – chances are it’s probably just lonely or scared and is trying to get your attention. One simple way to test this is simply to get up and start talking to it. If they stop every time you do this, then there’s a pretty good chance that your glider might be lonely - and you may want to consider getting them a little buddy.

Now on the other hand, if you have several gliders, and they suddenly decide to start barking at each other at night – here’s a little trick you can do that usually stops this behavior on a dime. As soon as they start barking, just turn on a small “night light” next to their cage – and it will almost always stop. ☺

Now, probably one of the cutest sounds that gliders often make is a very soft purring or chirping sound. It’s actually too soft to record and let you hear a sample of, but trust me, it’s one of the most soothing, adorable sounds you will ever hear – and the most common time they will do it is during content affectionate moments either with you – or each other.

Well, now that we’ve covered all the least common sounds – let’s talk about the one you’ll probably hear the most – and that’s sneezing. Sugar gliders often make a soft sneezing or hissing sound that goes something like this:

While this sound could be an indication of a serious medical problem – like an infection – in the vast majority of cases it’s completely normal and nothing to worry about.

For more information, go to: www.ASGV.org

© 2009 The Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians. All Rights Reserved

Most of the time, this “sneezing” or hissing sound is actually just a natural part of their cleaning ritual. You see, sugar gliders tend to keep themselves very clean – similar to cats – and never need bathing. In fact, one of their favorite pastimes – when they aren’t busy jumping or gliding around – is grooming themselves and their cage mates.

The way they do this is simply to spit into their hands – which makes a soft sneezing sound – and then grooming their entire body. Sugar gliders are very nimble little creatures, and there’s not one area of their body they can’t reach if they want to. It’s actually pretty neat to watch, because they are such clean, intelligent little animals.

Again, routine sneezing or hissing associated with grooming is usually nothing to worry about. However, if you notice that they are doing it excessively – or doing it while continuously trying to clean their genitalia - then it’s best to get them into your Vet right away for a quick checkup. 😊

Well, that’s about it for the most common sounds a sugar glider can make. There are a few others – but these are the biggies. Again, like we talk about in the video on toys, the vast majority of sounds that normally come from a sugar glider’s cage are usually caused by toys and other things you put inside their cage – so make sure to check out that video for more information. 😊

For more information, go to: www.ASGV.org

© 2009 The Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians. All Rights Reserved