



# ASSOCIATION OF SUGAR GLIDER VETERINARIANS™

## Potty-Training

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 show you the best way to "potty train" these little guys. ☺

First off, even though sugar gliders can't be trained to use something like a litter box, they are very intelligent little animals – and they're extremely predictable. Because of this, if you learn to "read" your animal's natural habits – and practice a couple simple conditioning exercises with them like I'll show you here in a second – they can go with you almost anywhere and make great companion pets. ☺

As a Vet, one of the biggest "myths" about sugar gliders that I see all over the internet is that they are extremely messy and poop and pee everywhere. The simple truth is that any untrained animal will poop or pee wherever it wants – and sugar gliders are no more – or less – messy than most other house pets. In fact, with a little understanding and training, they can easily hang out with you in your pockets all day without a single "accident".

For example, as a practicing Veterinarian, I almost always have at least one of my personal pet sugar gliders in my pockets all day long. I'm on the go, non-stop 10-12 hours a day – every day - and you can see from what I'm wearing that there's no way I could keep them on me like this if they just relieved themselves anywhere. The truth is, my little guys almost never have an accident as long as I'm paying attention to what they're telling me. ☺

First off, like a lot of other pets, sugar gliders usually won't go to the bathroom where they sleep. They are extremely clean little animals, that do not require bathing - and tend to keep themselves impeccably clean. In that way, they are very similar to cats.

Also, as I already mentioned in another video, the potty habits of sugar gliders are similar to human beings, in that the first thing we both usually do after waking up from a long nap is go to the bathroom.

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Understanding these two simple things are the foundation of training your baby, and avoiding unnecessary “accidents”. ☺

Training your sugar glider begins on the first day you pick them up – and the process is very simple. All you need is a little newspaper and some unscented baby wipes – and make sure to set them out in front of the cage before you try to pick up your baby. In fact, as a new parent, it’s a good idea to always keep a supply of newspaper & wipes within reach of the cage until you have them fully trained.

Once you’ve got the newspaper and baby wipes ready to go, from this point forward, every time you take your baby out of its cage, you’re going to “teach” them when to go to the bathroom using the following 3 steps.

Step one is to pick up the baby and stimulate it to go to the bathroom. Holding the baby in one hand like we demonstrated in another video, take a cool, moist baby wipe and gently wipe its rear end.

In most cases, if the baby hasn’t already started relieving itself, it will “let loose” as soon as you touch it with the baby wipe. This same technique is used to stimulate many other pets, and you can even massage their tummy a little to help the process along. After about a full minute of doing this, they will have the “first round” out of the way – and you are about half-way done. ☺

At this point, step two is to let them move from hand to hand using the “tube” technique we showed you in a previous video. Once their little legs start moving around for a couple minutes, this usually stimulates them to eliminate anything else that is still in their digestive tract. This process can take anywhere from a few seconds to a couple minutes, and they typically release 2-3 more pellets and a several more drops of urine. At this point, you are about 90% done. ☺

The third – and final - step in this process is simply to hold them again in one hand, and repeat the baby wipe technique. This works kinda like “insurance”, and physically stimulates them to release any other little “surprises” they may still be holding onto. Once you’ve done this for about 30 seconds to a minute - you should be pretty much all set.

Now, it usually takes anywhere from about one to five minutes for a trained sugar glider to completely “empty” itself when you first take it out of its cage. Having said that, the biggest mistake I see that most new owners make is simply stopping the process too soon – and then they get a little “present” or two on their shoulders. No matter what, in the beginning you will always have some accidents, but over time they will become less and less frequent as long as you stick to the training. It’s been my experience that every glider has slightly different “potty habits”, but once you know how your particular animal “does their business”, it’s pretty easy to know when they’re all done.

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From there, once they have essentially “emptied themselves”, they usually won’t go to the bathroom for the next 2-3 hours - unless of course you give them something to eat or drink. Well bonded sugar gliders love to hang out with their owners, and mine spend the majority of their time sleeping in my pockets all day. In fact, once you’ve got them trained, you’ll notice that about the only time they wake up is when they need to go to the bathroom. Therefore, whenever you feel one wake up - and it starts moving around in your pocket – what they are probably “telling” you is that they need to go to the bathroom. When this happens, just take them out of your pocket - let them do their business – and give them a snack when they’re done. ☺

Actually, once you learn your baby’s potty habits and train them using the techniques that I just showed you, the whole process really becomes very simple and predictable. In fact, to demonstrate how well all of this works, I’ll show you one of my personal pets – Tinkerbelle. She has been trained using all the techniques I just demonstrated for you, and she is very typical of how an adult sugar glider can be trained to be an excellent companion pet. ☺

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