



ASSOCIATION OF SUGAR GLIDER VETERINARIANS™

Do Sugar Gliders make good pets? – the pro’s & cons

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 pro’s – and con’s – of owning these little guys as pets.

Now, before we get started, I should point out that I have 4 of these little guys as my own personal pets – and I work with literally thousands of sugar gliders every year on a professional level. Because of this, I am constantly amazed at the mountains of distorted misinformation I find out on the internet all the time about sugar gliders – especially from people who claim to be “experts”. In fact, that is one of the main reasons why the Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians decided to produce this video series; so that owners - and potential new owners – like yourself finally have a reliable source of veterinary-approved information that you can trust.

So, if you’re thinking about getting sugar gliders as a pet, here are the most important facts you should consider.

First, sugar gliders can make wonderful companion pets – but like any animal, they aren’t for everybody. In fact, in my practice I always tell people that if you’re an “animal lover” – they’re a great pet... and if you’re not - then they’re a terrible pet.

One of the main advantages – and disadvantages – of owning sugar gliders is that they are extremely playful, loyal little creatures. They love attention and just hanging out with their owners in their pockets - and that’s one of the reasons why they can make a great companion for people who live by themselves and want an affectionate pet to spend time with.

Now, the flip side of this argument is that because they are so loving and affectionate, you need to be willing to spend quality time playing with them almost every day. In fact, the more time you can spend with them, the better - because if you just leave them alone for days at a time without paying any attention to them, they can become depressed.

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Fortunately, spending time with these little guys is pretty easy, because like I said, most of the time they just want to hang out in one of your pockets and take a nap. In fact, in my own practice, I usually have at least one of them in my pockets all day... I never have to worry about them jumping off me, and a lot of times I forget they're even there. Now, you don't have to spend anywhere near that much time with them, but you just need to be aware going into this that they really thrive on love and affection. ☺

Here's the bottom line. Despite what many internet chat rooms and websites like to claim, sugar gliders really are not any more – or less – difficult to care for than most other house pets. In fact, on balance I would have to say that they are actually one of the lowest-maintenance – companion type - pets that a person can own.

Now, having said that, let's run down the laundry list of some other important plus's and minus's when it comes to owning sugar gliders.

First, let's talk about biting. This is really kind of a non-issue with sugar gliders, because while they are capable of biting – they rarely do unless they are untrained, scared or being hurt. In other words, they're pretty much like any other pet.

Most of the time, if someone does get a little nip, it's either by a young baby or an older adult that has never been properly trained or bonded to people. Now, the good thing about sugar gliders in this regard is that their teeth really aren't made to bite down and shear things off, like a hamster or gerbil can. Instead, they're actually designed more like "tweezers", so in the rare circumstance that one would bite, most of the time it's just like a firm pinch.

Now, let's talk about going to the bathroom. It is true that sugar gliders can't technically be "potty-trained" to go in a litter box. However, they are extremely clean and very predictable little animals; so if you practice the techniques we cover in the potty-training video – and listen to what their body language is telling you – most of the time they can easily be with you all day without having a single accident. Like I said, I usually have AT LEAST ONE of these little guys on me almost all the time – and look at what I WEAR for a living. ☺

Now as far as them being messy or loud, we cover all those MYTHS in a lot more detail on other videos in this series, so check those out before making your buying decision. Basically, as long as you do a few simple things to make sure your cage is set up right and keep your animal healthy – they're pretty much the same as any other pet.

And that brings us to the topic of diet. Again, we have an entire video devoted just to this subject, so you should definitely check that out before making your buying decision. The bottom line though, is that feeding a sugar glider is very similar to other pets - like cats or dogs. A quality, balanced diet should contain 75% pellet food, 25% fresh fruits & vegetables, and a multivitamin that is sprinkled on their food every other day. All totaled, it should only cost around \$10 per month to feed a single, healthy sugar glider – and it doesn't have to be any more complicated than that.

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Now let's cover a topic that is directly related to diet – and that's smell. Internet websites like to say that sugar gliders stink terribly – and that there's no way to fix this. However, what these same sites then forget to say is that this odor is usually a direct result of following the same complicated, expensive diets that they insist on using.

When it comes to sugar glider odors, the bottom line is this. As an exotic Vet, I can tell you for a fact that what you feed ANY animal usually has a direct affect on how it smells. For example, if you feed your sugar glider excessive amounts of proteins, meats, sugars, and “live” foods (like crickets and mealworms), they will probably develop a pretty strong odor. On the other hand, if you follow a well-balanced diet like we outline in this video series, your animal will probably have almost NO discernable odor – especially if it's been neutered. In fact, whenever people remark about how clean MY gliders smell – the next question out of their mouth is usually how often do I give them a bath. When I tell them “never”, they are amazed.

Now, just to be clear – all animals obviously have some sort of smell – but most people find that a properly-fed sugar glider usually smells kind of like a puppy. The main exceptions to this – again assuming they are on the right diet – are males that have not been neutered. Like a lot of other intact, adult, male animals, if they are not neutered they will have a stronger odor – and mark their territory frequently – so that's one of the reasons why most REPUTABLE breeders only sell males that are already neutered.

Actually, to kind of wrap this up, if I had to compare a sugar glider to any one other type of pet, it would probably be a dog – because from an owners standpoint, they are similar in a lot of ways...

For example, when cared for properly they can live 12-15 years - or pretty much the same as most canines. Also, like a lot dogs, sugar gliders love to play and spend time with their owners. They are also surprisingly intelligent – especially for their size – and a well-trained glider can easily recognize their owners and even do tricks like jumping to them when called.

Now, on the flip side, sugar gliders tend to be a LOT less expensive than most dogs – in that it only costs about \$10 a month to feed one – and they don't require vaccinations or ongoing treatments for things like heartworms, etc.. 😊

Overall, like we said in the beginning of this video, sugar gliders can make wonderful companion pets – but they are not for everyone. Like any owning any animal, it is a commitment that should not be taken lightly.

As I've said repeatedly throughout this video series, I have sugar gliders as my own personal pets – and so do many of my friends. For my family, they are great little pets, but if you are seriously considering getting some, my professional advice is to watch all the videos in this series, and then make whatever decision you feel is best for you and your family. 😊

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