

## **Behavior**

African Pygmy Dormice behavior is agile, quick and very curious inquiring creatures who are hugely active at dusk and dawn. This means they need a great deal of enrichment, nests, climbing and places to hide to reduce the risks of fighting and to avoid inducing unnecessary stress. Dormice are generally shy, however can grow to become more confident and familiar with humans through regular interaction. This is why daily bonding, touching and handling from a young age is crucial. This will vary from animal to animal with some being simply too swift and shy to tame for handling. They are best considered an animal to watch rather than interact with, due to their levels of stress. Those that can be handled will prefer to climb all over their human, sit or sleep in their hands and hide in pockets and are unlikely to stay still for long; sometimes tolerating gentle stroking. Bonding pouches or pockets can be used for bonding purposes; though care must be taken to avoid injury from their small size and speed.

Dormice that are not keen on being touched, may be happy simply by taking food from familiar hands. They are extremely curious and do seem fascinated by voices; so have a conversation with them as they will listen!

NEVER grab your Dormouse by the body as they are fragile and they will most likely bite, due to fear of restraint.

AVOID grabbing the Dormouse by the tail, as it has the ability to 'slip off' or 'drop'. Always gently scoop up your Dormouse.

BE AWARE: Dormice can also Drop their tails, which will allow the tail to break off in order to avoid a predator in the wild. If this occurs, DO NOT PANIC, they will be fine and it will heal on its own. However, ideally separate that Dormouse into a clean enclosure until it heals (1 week) and provide additional monitoring; incase of an infection arises (Extremely Rare) - seek veterinary assistance.

For observation, you can obtain a red light or black light to view during the night, when they become most active. This will allow them to keep their natural routine, as they are very sensitive to the light.

Rapid breathing is a sign of distress, so be mindful of this when interacting with them. The Dormouse sounds for anger are very sharp and easy to recognize.

Do not be concerned if a dormouse pauses for longer periods of time at once - this is part of being a prey animal since movements would attract the attention of predators.

Dormice may become quite lethargic in daytime, becoming more active at dusk and dawn. They will conceal signs of illness very well, and often you will only see the very end stages of a problem. You should therefore keep an eye out for any significant changes in behavior, coat condition, and injuries.

Territory disputes can be brutal; you should always ensure you have a spare habitat to separate animals into if needed. Always ideal to have an Exotic animal veterinarian, incase of emergency.

If your dormice is cold to the touch however, it may be in a state of torpor. This means that the temperature is too low, (68\* Fahrenheit 20\* Celsius or Lower) and it believes it needs to conserve its own body fat due to a lack of available food. If this is the case, warm up your

Dormouse utilizing the warmth of hands, by simply cupping your hands around them. You can also use a heating pad indirectly, space heater or heat lamps. Once warmed, its crucial to have fresh water, honey/syrup/pollen mix (mentioned in Diet section)to bring your Dormouse glucose levels back up, that were depleted when reducing its body temperature. Dormice can DIE from this state, so it is important to ensure you keep their environment at a warm enough temperature. Dormice should have plenty of bedding, as well as access to food and water.

Dormice can get stressed out very easily, which can also lead to torpor. If you have to take them on a long car journey or send them in transport. Be sure to have additional nesting material and a hide 'if possible' in the container, to help reduce light and create a secure dark environment for travel; as well as the honey/syrup/pollen (mentioned in Diet section) mix available.