

## **Breeding**

Before beginning breeding African Pygmy Dormice, you must have a set goal. First, start networking with other Dormouse breeders to swap animals to ensure bloodlines remain fresh and to prevent inbreeding.

Breeding any animal should only be undertaken after a lot of thought, research and consideration of the animals well being. It is not a decision to be taken lightly. You must also have enough space to house a larger colony of actively breeding Dormice, and separate habitats in case of Dormouse territory disputes, as well as habitats from babies you intend to place in new homes.

Please bear in mind the high price tag (\$150-\$1K) and nocturnal nature of Dormouse mean they are not easy to find good/fit homes for. It will be crucial to direct potential homes to an online resource; such as The American Dormouse Association, as there are still keepers/breeders who feed only hamster food rather than a full and varied diet. Also, breeders/keepers who keep them in small and otherwise unsuitable enclosures, sadly.

In the event of sickness or ill-health you also need space for additional habitats. Breeding pairs need more space than normal. You will also want to provide a backup for your Dormice babies you home and let potential keepers know that, if they become unable to keep their Dormice; then they can be returned to you

Providing all the above provisions are met including their food, space and temperature needs are met; Dormice will be happy to breed.

A good mix is a Trio composed of 2 girls and an unrelated male. Breeding is self-regulated and they appear to breed both as the dominant pair and on a colony basis. While mating, the male will chase the female Dormouse around for some time and will sometimes bite the female Dormouse sharply on the back of the neck, once he has caught her. This is normal, don't panic.

Matings often occur during the night and will involve several bouts and also then a 'mating lock' where the male and female are joined together with the female being pulled around after the male.

Evidence suggests that male Dormouse have a barbed penis, to prevent another male from obstructing mating. Matings should be recorded if possible, to help identify when litters are due and so you can ensure no major clean outs of the enclosure during a risky time.

Your litter should arrive around 25-28 days from the time of observed mating. The Dormouse gestation period is between 25-28 days and the female will become less active for the days preceding the birth. Litter sizes range from 1-6 (Average 2-4) with eyes opening at around 14 days. Dormice pups weigh about 3.5g at birth. Do not disturb the litter for the first 14 days, however tempting, as it may distress the female which could lead her to eat the litter.

Note: In a single pair colony, the female is more prone to stress than in a large colony.

We advocate handling from 14 days; handling the Dormice pups will most definitely rely on the temperament of your female; keeping her stress levels in mind. Sometimes it is best to avoid disturbing the nest for 28 days instead; Especially with first time mothers. If you then want to try

handling the babies, make sure that the parents are also within hearing range as otherwise this will upset them greatly.

Young can remain with their parents for their entire span, although depending on gender this may not be advisable because of the risk of in-breeding. Adding a new bloodline to the colony will help deter this factor.

Observe the males; fighting between them can be fatal.

Mutations are relatively new with The African Pygmy Dormouse, as the pied variation has cropped up where an individual has a white splash across the forehead, mid body or tails. The standard fur coat ranges from the normal gray to more of a brown color.