



Chapter 050, Pocket Gopher (American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine)

Mark Suckow

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NOTE: This is a single chapter excerpted from the book *The Laboratory Rabbit, Guinea Pig, Hamster, and Other Rodents*, made available for individual purchase. Additional chapters, as well as the entire book, may be purchased separately.

This chapter discusses the current and potential uses of pocket gophers as laboratory animals. The evolved physiological and behavioral characteristics required for life underground render the pocket gopher valuable for a variety of investigations. Restrictions imposed by the subterranean ecotope make pocket gophers ideal subjects to examine the impact of reduced sensory modalities upon communication and energy costs associated with burrowing. Further, the solitary lifestyle of the pocket gopher allows a model system to investigate parasite–host relationships where transmission rates are relatively low. Recent advances in the husbandry of pocket gophers now make large-scale laboratory studies feasible. Information concerning the biology of pocket gophers and diseases to which they are susceptible is provided as well in this study. Pocket gophers do not readily transmit disease. Minor health issues common to newly captured animals, for example, ectoparasite infestations or skin irritations, are eliminated during quarantine. Dental problems, such as incisor breakage or malocclusions, can occur. Malocclusions are rare, but can cause serious threat to an individual's health. If properly clipped, nail injuries are minimal. Once established, maintaining the health of a pocket gopher colony is not difficult.

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