

WALNUT CREEK SUPPLY

THE COMPLETE CARE GUIDE

Sugar Glider

BML diet, colony living and a 15-year commitment



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New owner? Go straight to Section 1. It is written so you can set up a safe, correct home and get through the first 48 hours without reading anything else first.

Sugar gliders arrive in people's lives with an almost unfair amount of charm — pocket-sized marsupials with enormous dark eyes, a liquid glide from your shoulder to your forearm, and a social bond with their keeper that most people describe as genuinely surprising for a small animal. They also arrive with a care profile that is more demanding than almost any other small mammal sold as a pet, and that gap between the marketing and the husbandry is where most problems begin. A sugar glider who is kept alone, fed commercial "glider pellets," and housed in a cage sized for a hamster is not a happy glider. She is a suffering one, and the suffering often progresses quietly for months before anything visible prompts an owner to look more closely. This guide exists to close that gap before you bring your first pair home. The good news is that sugar gliders kept with genuine knowledge of their needs — in bonded pairs, on a properly prepared diet, in a tall wire cage with enrichment and nightly time out — are among the most rewarding small companions in the hobby. The commitment is real and the learning curve is steeper than for most small pets. So is the payoff.

SECTION 1

Quick Start: Your First 48 Hours

1. **Never bring a single sugar glider home.** A lone sugar glider is not a properly kept sugar glider — it is an animal at serious psychological risk. Self-mutilation, refusal to eat, and death from stress-related causes have all been documented in solitary-housed gliders. Bring a bonded pair or a compatible pair introduced before purchase. Everything in this guide assumes at least two animals. This rule has no exceptions.
2. **Build the complete enclosure before your gliders arrive.** Minimum footprint for two gliders is 24" × 24" × 36" tall — and height matters more than floor area for this arboreal species. A taller cage is always better. Bar spacing must be ½ inch or less; gliders squeeze through wider gaps with determination. Have branches, sleeping pouches, and food stations installed and tested before the gliders enter.
3. **Prepare a complete batch of diet before your gliders arrive.** If you are starting with the BML diet — the most widely used consensus diet — the recipe requires a blending session the night before your gliders come home. Do not rely on commercial sugar glider pellets as a bridge. See the Diet section for the full recipe. Have it made, portioned into ice cube trays, and frozen.
4. **Set the room temperature and confirm it is draft-free.** Sugar gliders are comfortable between 70° and 90°F and are more sensitive to cold drafts and rapid temperature changes than to moderate heat or cold within that band. Confirm the cage location has no direct airflow from a window, vent, or air conditioner. The room's ambient temperature matters more than a heat lamp in this species.
5. **Install two sleeping pouches before the gliders arrive.** Each pouch should be a small fabric sack — fleece is ideal, with no loose threads or loops that can snag toes — hung high in the cage where it feels secure. Sugar gliders sleep in their pouch together during the day and should be disturbed as little as possible during daylight hours. Expect them to be inactive and sleeping from roughly dawn until after dark.
6. **Place food and water stations near the top of the cage.** Sugar gliders forage high in the wild. A food dish placed on the cage floor is often ignored; one mounted near the top is readily found. Use stainless steel or ceramic bowls that clip securely to the bars. Freshwater is available in a sipper bottle and a small open dish — gliders sometimes prefer one or the other, and redundancy is practical for an animal whose daily water intake can vary.
7. **Plan your first week of handling for short, low-pressure sessions.** Your gliders may crab — produce a loud, buzzing, locust-like alarm sound — every time you open the cage for the first week or longer. This is normal. It means they are frightened, not that they are aggressive animals. Consistent gentle presence, not forced interaction, is what builds trust over the coming weeks.

8. **Set up a bonding pouch for yourself.** A bonding pouch is a small fabric sack worn inside your shirt near your skin warmth, where your gliders sleep while you go about your day. You can begin acclimating your gliders to your scent this way from the first week, carrying them during their natural sleep hours without direct handling interaction. This is the primary bonding tool and it works reliably over a timeline of weeks to months.
9. **Check local regulations before your gliders arrive — ideally before purchase.** Sugar glider ownership is **illegal in Pennsylvania** (our home state) and is commonly listed as illegal or restricted in **California, Hawaii and Alaska**, plus some municipalities and counties elsewhere. In Pennsylvania, the Game Commission treats sugar gliders as exotic wildlife and does not allow them to be kept or sold as pets; bills to legalize them, most recently House Bill 692 introduced in 2025, have not passed as of this writing. Sellers at expos and online are not always reliable sources of this information. Check your state fish and wildlife authority's current regulations directly. It is also worth noting that selling sugar gliders in some states requires a USDA permit; if you are purchasing from a breeder, ask whether they hold the appropriate licensure.
10. **Find an exotic vet who sees marsupials before your gliders come home — not after.** Most general practice veterinarians do not see sugar gliders. Most small mammal vets do not, either. You need an exotic practice with documented experience treating marsupials. Call ahead and confirm before you need them. A sugar glider who is visibly unwell can deteriorate within 24 to 48 hours; having a vet number already confirmed is not a luxury.

First-Time Starter Bundle

What needs to be in the house on day one, and what to look for in each category.

Essentials

- **A tall wire cage with ½-inch or smaller bar spacing** — minimum 24" × 24" × 36" for two gliders, though taller is strongly preferred. Sugar gliders are arboreal climbers who use vertical space meaningfully. Powder-coated wire construction is durable and easy to clean. Avoid cages designed for birds if the bar spacing exceeds ½ inch, and never use glass aquariums — ventilation is critical for this species.
- **Two fleece sleeping pouches** — hung high inside the cage, one to use and one in rotation for washing. Fleece is the standard material: it does not fray into loose threads that can entangle toes, it holds body heat efficiently, and it can be washed and dried on a regular schedule without degrading. Inspect every seam regularly for snag points.
- **Stainless steel or ceramic food dishes clipped to the upper cage bars** — at least two: one for the nightly diet serving and one for fresh fruits or insects. Clip-on bowl attachments are far more stable than dishes that rest on ledges and get knocked over.
- **A sipper water bottle and a small open water dish** — both available simultaneously; gliders have individual water preferences and some strongly prefer one format. Replace water daily.
- **A kitchen scale accurate to 1 gram** — weight is the single most reliable early indicator of health or dietary problems in sugar gliders. Weigh each glider weekly and log the numbers. A glider losing 10% of body weight without dietary cause is a vet appointment.
- **Wooden branches or rope perches installed at multiple heights** — provide climbing paths from floor to ceiling of the cage, and foraging surfaces for enrichment. Remove any branches collected outdoors and bake them at 250°F for one hour before use to eliminate mites, fungi, and hitchhiking bacteria.
- **A reptile or bird digital thermometer for the room** — not inside the cage, but for the ambient room temperature where the cage sits. Confirm the space stays within 70–90°F at all hours, including overnight in winter.

Ready to set up? Browse the essentials in our collections: Critter Enclosures and Critter Bedding and Accessories.

Enrichment

- **Additional sleeping pouches in varied textures and sizes** — gliders are opinionated about sleeping quarters and benefit from having options rotated weekly. A bonding pouch worn inside your shirt during the day serves double duty as enrichment and socialization tool.
- **Rope perches, vine spirals, and lateral climbing branches** — fill vertical space with varied climbing paths. A cage that is full of movement opportunities is a cage that keeps gliders mentally active and physically fit. Secure all climbing elements so they cannot shift or fall under the combined weight of two active animals at speed.
- **Small foraging toys and treat pouches** — mealworm tucked inside a small fleece pouch, a pine cone rubbed with fruit juice, or a shallow dish of insects buried under a light layer of leaves; gliders in the wild spend significant time searching for insects and nectar, and foraging behavior in captivity is enriching in a way that a dish of food placed in the open cannot replicate.
- **A play gym or free-roam tent for supervised out-of-cage time** — a dedicated safe space for supervised gliding and climbing time outside the cage. A pop-up mesh laundry hamper or small tent can serve as a secure out-of-cage play zone. Gliders need time to glide in open space and a small cage does not substitute for this.
- **A travel carrier or bonding bag** — a secure, ventilated pouch for vet travel. Introduce the carrier to the main cage weeks before any trip so it carries familiar scent rather than the alarm associations of sudden confinement.

Enrichment, one click away. Shop Critter Toys and Accessories.

SECTION 2

Meet Your Sugar Glider

Wild sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) are native to the tropical and eucalyptus forests of **Australia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea**, where they inhabit the forest canopy in colonies of up to 30 individuals. They are **marsupials** — not rodents, not primates, not in any taxonomic relationship to flying squirrels despite the superficial resemblance. Like all marsupials, females carry undeveloped young called **joeys** in a ventral pouch after a gestation period of only 15 to 16 days. A joey exits the pouch as a fully furred, open-eyed juvenile at around 10 weeks of age, and the pair are called "out-of-pouch" (OOP) from that point forward. This reproductive biology is relevant to husbandry: an unspayed female housed with an intact male will breed cyclically and repeatedly, and breeding pairs require additional nutritional support and planning.

Trait	Detail
Common name	Sugar glider
Scientific name	<i>Petaurus breviceps</i>
Native range	Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea
Wild habitat	Tropical and eucalyptus forest canopy; communal colony structure
Adult weight	4–5 oz (110–140 g); males slightly heavier than females
Adult body length	5–6 inches body; 6-inch tail; total length approximately 12 inches
Typical lifespan	10–15 years with good care
Activity pattern	Strictly nocturnal — most active between 10 pm and 4 am
Social structure	Colony animal — must be kept in bonded pairs or groups; solitary housing is harmful
Gliding membrane	Patagium — a thin skin membrane running from wrist to ankle; enables glides of up to 150 feet in the wild
Reproductive type	Marsupial; female carries joeys in a ventral pouch

What surprises new owners

The diet commitment is the first and largest surprise. Most new owners walk into a pet store expecting a "sugar glider food" bag to be the answer, the same way there is a hamster food and a gerbil food that work perfectly well for those species. No equivalent exists for sugar gliders. Commercial sugar glider pellets sold at most chain pet stores are nutritionally inadequate for long-term health and are associated with the metabolic bone disease that is the most common preventable cause of premature death in captive gliders. The diet that works — whether the **BML (Bourbon's Modified Leadbeater's)** recipe or the **HPWBD (High Protein Wombaroo Blend Diet)** — requires sourcing specific ingredients, preparing a fresh batch every week or two, and freezing individual servings in ice cube trays for nightly thawing. This is not complicated once you have done it a few times, but it is not buying a bag. It requires planning and consistency.

The crabbing sound is the second surprise. **Crabbing** is the loud, sharp, locust-like buzzing alarm call that sugar gliders produce when frightened, startled, or moved out of their comfort zone. New owners who have never heard it often assume the animal is aggressive or in pain. It is neither. It is a fear response — the equivalent of a small mammal fluffing up and hissing — and it does not predict whether the animal will ever become a confident, bonded companion. Most well-socialized adult sugar gliders crab only rarely if at all. A new glider who crabs every time the cage opens will, with patient and consistent handling, become a glider who runs to the door of the cage when she hears your voice.

The sleep schedule is the third surprise, and for families with children it deserves direct attention before purchase. Sugar gliders are deeply nocturnal. They are genuinely asleep from roughly dawn until after dark, and waking them during the day — even for the best intentions — causes stress and disrupts the sleep cycle that their immune system and digestion depend on. Sugar gliders are not pets to handle immediately after school. Their natural active window is 10 pm to 4 am, and keeping them as companions means adapting your routine to theirs more than the other way around.

The lifespan surprises people in both directions — some do not realize sugar gliders live 10 to 15 years, which makes them a longer commitment than most dogs when purchased young. This deserves serious consideration before the first pair comes home.

SECTION 3

Enclosure Setup & Layout

Footprint, height, and bar spacing

The minimum enclosure for two adult sugar gliders is **24" × 24" × 36" tall**, and the height dimension is the critical one. Sugar gliders are arboreal animals who move vertically through forest canopy in the wild; a cage that is wide but not tall is a cage that does not serve their movement needs. A **24" × 24" × 48"** or taller setup is a legitimate long-term improvement that two active gliders will use entirely. Larger colonies of three or four animals need proportionally more vertical and horizontal space — add at minimum 12 inches of height and 12 inches of width per additional animal beyond the first pair.

Bar spacing is non-negotiable at ½ inch maximum. Adult gliders at 4 to 5 ounces will find and exploit any gap wider than this, and joeys — young gliders who are recently out of pouch — can pass through ½-inch spacing as well. If your cage has dual-layer bar crossings that create slightly larger diagonal gaps at the intersections, test those specifically. Powder-coated wire is durable and easy to sanitize. Avoid galvanized wire, which can flake zinc as the coating wears — zinc toxicity is a documented problem in gliders who chew cage bars habitually.

Never use a glass aquarium. Glass enclosures do not provide the ventilation this species requires. Adequate airflow across all four vertical sides of the cage is not optional — respiratory health in sugar gliders is directly tied to ambient air quality and humidity management, and a glass box with a screen lid provides only top ventilation.

Sleeping pouch placement and the high-forager principle

Sleeping pouches should be hung **near the top of the cage** — sugar gliders feel most secure at height, and a pouch placed at mid-cage or lower is less likely to be used. Mount the pouch hook through a bar at the top third of the cage with enough vertical clearance that the glider can enter and exit freely. Have two to three pouches available so one is always in the wash; gliders return to their pouch by scent, and a freshly washed pouch may initially be avoided until it re-acquires familiar smell — leave a small piece of worn fleece inside when reintroducing a clean pouch.

Food and water stations should be installed in the **upper half of the cage**. In the wild, sugar gliders forage in the canopy, not at ground level. A dish placed at floor height is not where a glider's foraging instinct will direct her. Position food bowls at approximately two-thirds cage height, secured to the bars with clip-on hardware that cannot be knocked free by an animal who moves with considerable speed and agility at 2 am.

Branch layout and climbing paths

Fill the cage with climbing paths that cover the full vertical range — not just one or two horizontal branches, but a network of diagonal limbs, rope perches, and lateral platforms that allow the glider to navigate from the floor to the sleeping pouch using continuous contact points. Leave one or two zones of clear open air near the top of the cage: these are the launch points your gliders will use for their in-cage gliding, and an unobstructed drop of 18 to 24 inches between a high perch and a landing surface gives them genuine gliding experience within their enclosure space.

SECTION 4

Substrate & Cage Maintenance

Sugar gliders are not burrowing animals. They sleep overhead, forage high, and rarely interact with the cage floor intentionally. The cage floor primarily needs to catch waste and be cleaned efficiently. There is no substrate in a sugar glider cage that performs a biological function the way substrate does in a reptile enclosure — it is a surface for collection and cleaning, nothing more.

Floor liner option	Best for	Hygiene performance	Notes
Fleece cage liner	All setups; most commonly used	Excellent — easy to lift, shake clean, launder on a regular rotation	No loose threads; wash in unscented detergent; no fabric softener (residue is inhaled by animals who forage along the floor)
Paper-based liner (unprinted newsprint or packing paper)	New setups; observation phases; quarantine	Good — completely disposable; visible waste is easy to identify	Replace daily; does not absorb as efficiently as fleece but leaves no laundry requirement; useful during a health-monitoring period
Puppy training pads	Temporary use; travel setups	Adequate — absorbent and disposable	Some gliders will shred them; absorbent polymer filling is not a significant ingestion risk in small quantities but avoid prolonged chewing
Loose wood shavings, sand, or particulate substrate	Not recommended	Poor — gliders occasionally land at floor level after a long glide and can ingest loose particles; wet patches become bacterial culture sites quickly	No biological benefit; adds cleaning complexity without improving hygiene
No liner (bare wire tray)	Clinics and temporary quarantine only	Adequate for short-term observation; feces visible immediately	Uncomfortable landing surface; not suitable for long-term housing

Recommended floor practice: two to three fleece liners in rotation — one in the cage, one clean and ready, one in the wash. Lift and replace daily or every other day. The cage tray wipes down in under a minute when covered with a fleece liner that catches the bulk of waste.

Cage cleaning schedule: spot-check daily; full liner replacement every one to two days; complete cage wipe-down with a dilute unscented vinegar solution or a small-mammal-safe disinfectant weekly. Remove and scrub food bowls daily — fruit residue and insect protein left overnight in a warm room becomes a bacterial problem by morning. Sleeping pouches go into the wash every four to seven days on a rotation cycle. Inspect all pouch seams, rope perches, and fleece surfaces for loose threads or fraying fabric every wash cycle.

SECTION 5

Temperature & Light — The 2 Factors

Sugar gliders tolerate a wider ambient temperature range than most small exotic mammals, but they are not hardy in cold and they are acutely sensitive to drafts, rapid temperature changes, and cold surfaces. The two environmental factors that matter most are ambient temperature stability and the natural light-dark cycle.

Parameter	Target	How to measure it	What goes wrong when it's off
Ambient room temperature	70–90°F — 75–80°F is the comfortable middle; never below 65°F for any sustained period	Room thermometer placed at cage height; a digital min/max thermometer records overnight lows	Below 65°F: torpor — sugar gliders enter a semi-hibernation state that is not normal and that stresses the immune system; below 55°F: hypothermia risk; above 95°F with poor ventilation: heat stress, rapid dehydration
Temperature stability (no drafts)	Stable; rate-of-change more important than absolute value	A thermometer logged over 24 hours reveals overnight drops that are invisible during daytime checks	Rapid temperature swings trigger immune stress; drafts from HVAC vents or window cracks cause upper respiratory infections even at an otherwise acceptable mean temperature
Light cycle (photoperiod)	12 hours light / 12 hours dark — natural or ambient room light is sufficient; sugar gliders do not require UV	Natural window light or ambient room lighting on a consistent daily schedule	A sugar glider with no consistent light cycle has disrupted circadian rhythm, which affects sleep quality, hormonal cycles, reproductive health, and immune function
Supplemental heat (if needed)	A ceramic heat emitter on a thermostat, or a radiant heat panel, if the room routinely drops below 70°F overnight	Thermostat probe at cage height; confirm ambient (not radiant spot) temperatures	An unthermostated heat source can create a hot spot the glider cannot escape; always use a thermostat and confirm the probe is positioned at animal level

On UV light

Sugar gliders are nocturnal and do not synthesize vitamin D3 from sunlight in the way a diurnal reptile does. They are not adapted for direct UVB exposure and do not require a UVB lamp. A natural light cycle from a window is sufficient for normal circadian rhythm. Avoid placing the cage where direct midday sunlight can heat it — a cage in a sunny window can rapidly exceed 90°F in summer even when ambient room temperatures are comfortable.

SECTION 6

Diet & Nutrition — The BML Commitment



The BML diet is made in batches and frozen in ice cube trays. The commitment is real, and so is the difference it makes.

Diet is the single most consequential aspect of sugar glider care, the most commonly handled incorrectly, and the area where the gap between pet store advice and actual husbandry knowledge is widest. This section is longer than any other in this guide because it deserves to be. Getting the diet right is not optional. Metabolic bone disease — caused directly by calcium-phosphorus imbalance in a poorly constructed diet — is the most common preventable cause of premature death in captive sugar gliders in North America, and it is entirely avoidable with the right approach from the start.

Why commercial sugar glider food fails

The short answer is calcium-to-phosphorus ratio. Wild sugar gliders are omnivores who eat nectar, pollen, tree sap, insects, and small vertebrates in proportions that balance calcium and phosphorus at a roughly 2:1 ratio. Commercial pellet diets sold specifically for sugar gliders — and more broadly, the "seed and nut mix" products that end up in many glider cages — typically have inverted or severely imbalanced Ca:P ratios that, over months and years, draw calcium from bone to maintain blood calcium levels. The result is **metabolic bone disease (MBD)**: soft bones, spontaneous fractures, and eventually the inability to move, eat, or survive. MBD is not a quick illness. It develops slowly over six to eighteen months, and by the time the signs are obvious — a limping glider, a fractured hindlimb from a short fall — the damage is already significant.

The other failure mode is sugar content. Sugar gliders have "sugar" in their name, and their wild diet does include nectar. It does not include the processed corn syrup, artificial coloring, and dried fruit concentrates that make many commercial glider foods palatable enough to be accepted voluntarily. Chronic high-sugar diets contribute to obesity, diabetes-like metabolic dysfunction, and dental disease. The fact that a glider eats something enthusiastically does not mean it is appropriate. Gliders will also eat chocolate with enthusiasm. That is not an endorsement.

The two consensus diets

Experienced sugar glider keepers and exotic veterinarians in North America largely converge on two diet protocols that maintain correct calcium-phosphorus balance and adequate protein. Neither involves buying a bag of pellets. Both require preparation.

BML (Bourbon's Modified Leadbeater's): The most widely used diet in the North American sugar glider community. It is a homemade recipe prepared in batches, frozen in ice cube trays, and thawed nightly. The recipe below is the standard formulation as widely shared in the glider keeper community; consult an exotic vet to confirm the current recommended ratios for your specific animals.

BML Ingredient	Amount per batch	Role
Honey (raw or regular — not low-sugar substitutes)	■ cup	Carbohydrate energy source; provides palatability
Gerber 2nd Foods baby food — chicken (pureed)	1 jar (2.5 oz)	Primary protein source
Gerber 2nd Foods baby food — mixed fruits (pureed)	2 jars (4 oz total)	Carbohydrate, micronutrients, palatability
Hard-boiled eggs, shells removed, blended smooth	2 large eggs	Secondary protein; fat; vitamin content
100% fruit juice — apple or white grape, no added sugar	4 oz	Hydration, fruit sugars; no artificial sweeteners permitted
Rep-Cal Herptivite multivitamin (reptile formulation)	■ cup	Vitamin A, B, E complex; D3 from supplement
Rep-Cal Calcium with Vitamin D3 (no phosphorus)	2 tablespoons	Corrects calcium-phosphorus ratio — the most critical ingredient

Preparation: Combine honey, baby food, fruit juice, and blended eggs in a blender and process until smooth. Add Rep-Cal Herptivite and Calcium supplements and blend again briefly until fully incorporated. The finished mixture is a pale tan liquid with a texture slightly thicker than fruit juice. Pour into standard ice cube trays — each cube equals approximately one serving for one glider — and freeze. Each night, remove one to two cubes per glider pair, allow them to thaw at room temperature for 30 to 45 minutes or briefly in warm water, and place in the cage food dish before the gliders become active (around dusk). Remove any uneaten portion by morning. A full batch typically makes 14 to 20 cubes and lasts one pair of gliders approximately one to two weeks.

HPWBD (High Protein Wombaroo Blend Diet): An alternative consensus diet using **Wombaroo High Protein Supplement** — an Australian product available from specialist exotic suppliers — as the primary protein base. The HPWBD follows a similar blend-and-freeze preparation protocol and is widely used by breeders and experienced keepers as an alternative to BML, particularly when the Gerber baby food ingredients are unavailable or when specific protein levels need adjustment. Both BML and HPWBD are legitimate, well-tested options. The critical common thread is the Rep-Cal calcium supplement or an equivalent that corrects the Ca:P ratio. If you are switching from one diet to the other, transition over 7 to 10 days by blending the two in increasing ratios of the new diet — cold-switch refusals are common.

Insect supplementation

Three times per week, supplement the nightly diet serving with live or recently killed insects. The species used most commonly by experienced keepers are **dubia roaches, mealworms, and crickets** — in that preference order. Dubia roaches have the best

protein-to-fat ratio and are widely available from feeder insect suppliers. Mealworms are accepted enthusiastically but are high in fat and should not be the sole insect source. Crickets are accepted well but require gut-loading (feeding the crickets nutritious food 24 hours before offering, so the glider gets the nutritional benefit of what the cricket ate). Offer 3 to 5 appropriately sized insects per glider per feeding night. Wild-caught insects should never be used — pesticide exposure risk is too high and too unpredictable.

Fresh fruit and vegetables

Supplement up to **25% of the total nightly diet volume** with small pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables. This 25% ceiling is important — more than that displaces the nutritionally complete BML serving and unbalances the diet. Sugar gliders show strong preferences for sweet fruit and will selectively eat it while ignoring the BML if the ratio is off. Offer the BML and insects first; add fruit after the primary diet is established as the expected serving.

Safe fresh foods	Foods to offer only sparingly	NEVER feed
Apple (no seeds), mango, papaya, melon, berries, kiwi	Grapes and raisins (oxalic acid — small amounts only)	Chocolate or anything containing caffeine
Cooked sweet potato, cooked carrot, cucumber	High-oxalate greens (spinach, beet greens)	Onion, garlic, leeks, chives — toxic to small mammals
Green beans, snap peas, cooked corn (not raw)	Citrus in large amounts (stomach upset in some individuals)	Raw corn — binds calcium and worsens Ca:P imbalance
Mango, papaya, fig	High-fat nuts in excess	Cheese and dairy products
Cooked chicken (small amount, plain)	Dried fruit concentrates with added sugar	Canned foods with preservatives or salt
—	—	Pits and seeds from stone fruits (cherry, peach, plum) — contain cyanogenic compounds
—	—	Any food with artificial sweeteners (xylitol is acutely toxic)

The honest time commitment

Preparing a batch of BML takes approximately 20 minutes once you have done it twice. The daily feeding routine — remove a cube from the freezer to thaw, refresh the food dish before dusk, remove the dish by morning — takes under 5 minutes. The weekly commitment is not substantial. The planning commitment is: you need ingredients on hand before you run out, and you cannot substitute commercial food as a stopgap without setting back your animals' nutritional baseline. The gliders who suffer most under poor diet are the ones owned by busy people who intended to do it right but never got around to sourcing the supplements. Get the supplements first, before the gliders arrive.

Shop the food and supplies: Browse Critter Food Treats & Feed.

SECTION 7

Bonding & Socialization

Sugar gliders are among the few small mammals who form genuine, lasting bonds with their human companions — not merely tolerating handling, but actively seeking out their keeper's presence, gliding to them voluntarily, and sleeping contentedly in a bonding pouch worn against their keeper's skin. This bond takes time and is built through consistency, not force. The timeline is weeks to months, not days, and it cannot be rushed without causing exactly the opposite of the intended result.

The bonding pouch method

The **bonding pouch** — a small zippered or velcro-closed fabric sack with ventilation, worn inside your shirt against your skin — is the primary bonding tool for sugar gliders and the approach most consistently recommended by experienced keepers and exotic vets alike. The method works because sugar gliders bond primarily through scent and warmth, and a glider who spends the day sleeping against your skin while you go about your business is a glider who is building an association between your scent and absolute safety — without any of the stressful forced interaction that comes from repeated attempts to hold an unwilling animal.

Begin bonding pouch use from the first week. Place your gliders in the pouch in the early morning after their active period ends, when they are naturally ready to sleep. Place the pouch inside your shirt. They will sleep. You carry them. Do this for one to two hours per day, every day. After one to two weeks of daily carry, most gliders stop crabbing when you open the pouch and will begin emerging on their own when they hear your voice during the evening. After four to six weeks of consistent daily carry, the majority of gliders are comfortable with direct handling for at least short sessions.

Crabbing vs. biting

Crabbing is the loud, sharp, locust-buzz alarm vocalization that sugar gliders produce when frightened. It is often continuous during the first weeks of bonding work and can be startlingly loud for an animal that fits in your palm. Crabbing is not aggression. It means the animal is frightened and does not yet associate you with safety. The correct response to crabbing is to continue what you are doing calmly — open the cage, move the pouch, proceed with gentle handling — without reaction, alarm, or retreat. Retreating every time a glider crabs rewards the behavior and extends the timeline considerably.

Biting is distinct from crabbing and is important to read correctly. A glider who crabs and then bites if you continue to advance is communicating that the current stress level is too high for the current session — end the session, but not in a way that rewards the bite. A glider who nibbles your skin without prior crabbing is often **scent-tasting** — exploring with her teeth to identify you — and this exploratory nibble is not a bite in the defensive sense. It typically decreases as the bond strengthens and scent familiarity increases. Consistent handling, not avoidance, is what reduces both over time.

Daily handling protocol

During the first weeks, limit handling to bonding pouch carry. Once crabbing decreases to occasional or absent, begin brief direct handling sessions of 5 to 10 minutes during the evening active period. Let the glider move between your hands rather than holding her still. Sugar gliders feel most secure when moving — a stationary hold feels like confinement to an animal adapted for constant movement through a canopy. Allow gliding between your hands, from hand to shoulder, and from shoulder to forearm. Support the full body at all times; a glider whose hindquarters are unsupported will scramble and stress.

Voice familiarity is underrated. Talk to your gliders during daily feeding, during bonding pouch carry, and during cage interaction. They learn to associate your voice with safety before they fully accept physical contact, and a glider who hears a familiar voice will often settle from a crabbing response much faster than one who only experiences silent hands.

Children and sugar gliders

Sugar gliders can be wonderful companions for children who are old enough to understand that the animals are not toys — roughly age 10 and older as a practical guideline, though this depends on the individual child. Younger children often cannot

moderate the sudden movements, high-pitched sounds, and unpredictable reaching that trigger crabbing and undermine weeks of bonding work. Have any child handle the glider while seated on the floor so that the landing distance in a jump or glide is small. Never leave a child under 12 unsupervised with the cage open. Teach all children in the household what crabbing sounds like and what it means before anyone handles the animals.

SECTION 8

Common Challenges & Solutions

Self-mutilation

What you see: wounds on the animal's body — most often at the tip of the tail, on the genitals, or around the chest or neck — that the glider has inflicted on herself through chewing, scratching, or biting. The wounds may be fresh or may have been present for some time before they are noticed. In severe cases the damage progresses rapidly. **Why:** self-mutilation in sugar gliders is most commonly caused by **being housed alone** — this is the single most documented cause and is treated as a psychological emergency. Other causes include chronic unresolved pain (from an internal injury, a broken limb, or a prolapsed cloaca), severe environmental stress, cage-bar zinc toxicity, and — less commonly — skin parasites or fungal infection at the wound site. **What to do:** if the animal is alone, secure a same-sex companion or bonding partner immediately and contact an exotic vet the same day. If the animal is already paired, isolate her from the companion briefly to observe whether she continues to self-harm, and proceed to the vet same day regardless. A self-mutilating glider is in pain, in crisis, or both. **When to call a vet:** the same day you notice wounds, without exception.

Metabolic bone disease (MBD)

What you see: a glider who cannot land or grip properly; hindlimb weakness or dragging; apparent difficulty climbing; in advanced cases, bones that fracture from minor falls or even from normal movement; a generally lethargic animal who is losing weight. **Why:** chronic calcium-phosphorus imbalance from a diet that does not include a proper calcium supplement — almost always associated with commercial sugar glider pellets as the primary food source, or a homemade diet missing the Rep-Cal calcium with D3 supplement. The body draws calcium from bone to maintain blood calcium levels, and the resulting softening of the skeletal structure progresses until fracture and immobility occur. **What to do:** transition to a correct BML or HPWBD diet immediately and confirm supplement inclusion. **When to call a vet:** any time you observe hindlimb weakness, dragging, or a fall that results in lameness — MBD in progress requires veterinary diagnostics to assess bone density and guide supplementation levels, and the sooner it is caught, the more reversible it is.

Rectal prolapse

What you see: a small, pink or red, moist-looking protrusion from the cloaca — the combined urogenital and rectal opening — that the glider cannot retract. This is visible tissue that should be inside the body. **Why:** most commonly caused by straining from diarrhea, constipation, or intestinal parasites; can also occur from chronic dietary imbalance or as a complication of reproductive cycling in unsprayed females. **What to do:** keep the exposed tissue moist with a small amount of plain, unscented petroleum jelly or sterile saline applied with a clean cotton swab; place the glider in a clean, warm enclosure on paper liner; prevent the tissue from drying out. **When to call a vet:** immediately, the same day. Rectal prolapse is a surgical emergency — exposed tissue dries, becomes necrotic, and is not repairable once that process advances. Do not attempt to push the tissue back in without veterinary guidance.

Gastrointestinal parasites

What you see: soft, watery, or unusually odorous feces; weight loss despite normal food consumption; decreased activity; distended abdomen in moderate-to-severe cases. **Why:** internal parasites — most commonly **Giardia** or **Cryptosporidium** — are acquired from contaminated food, water, insects from questionable sources, or contact with an infected animal. **What to do:** maintain strict hygiene — discard any suspect feeder insects from unknown sources; ensure water is changed daily; clean food bowls every morning; avoid offering wild-caught insects. **When to call a vet:** any soft or watery stool lasting more than 48 hours, any unexplained weight loss, or any distension of the abdomen; diagnosis requires fecal analysis, and treatment requires prescription antiparasitic medication.

Respiratory infection

What you see: nasal discharge; labored or audible breathing; clicking or wheezing sounds during rest; a glider who is hunched, less active than usual, or sleeping outside the pouch in an unusual position during the night. **Why:** most commonly triggered by cold drafts, sustained ambient temperatures below 65°F, rapid temperature changes, or a bacterial infection secondary to an immune-compromising stressor. Sugar gliders are susceptible to respiratory pathogens and do not have the robust resistance to drafts and temperature swings that many small mammals show. **What to do:** immediately correct any temperature or draft issue; move the cage if necessary; keep the animal warm. **When to call a vet:** within 24 to 48 hours of noticing any respiratory symptom. Untreated respiratory infections progress to pneumonia in this species and become life-threatening quickly.

Cloacal and pouch infections in females

What you see: discharge at the cloaca or visible swelling around it; in females with joeys, a joey who fails to thrive or fails to appear out-of-pouch at the expected age; the female grooming the cloaca or pouch area excessively; visible redness or odor. **Why:** bacterial infection of the cloaca or the marsupial pouch, typically introduced through contaminated cage substrate, dirty food bowls, or following a difficult birth. Breeding females in continuously cycling pairs are at elevated risk. **What to do:** keep the cage exceptionally clean; ensure the female has a stress-low environment during joeys' development period. **When to call a vet:** any visible discharge, any joey who appears ill or who fails to emerge from the pouch at the expected time, or any female showing signs of excessive cloaca-grooming; these infections require antibiotic treatment and can be fatal to both the mother and any current joey if left untreated.

Dehydration

What you see: a glider who is less active than usual; skin that stays briefly "tented" when gently pinched rather than snapping back immediately; sunken or dull eyes; a dry mouth when the lips are parted; in severe dehydration, unresponsiveness. **Why:** dehydration in otherwise healthy sugar gliders is often dietary — the BML diet does include fluid from fruit juice, but gliders who are not eating their full serving and who also are not accessing sufficient fresh water can become dehydrated more quickly than a larger animal. High ambient temperatures increase the risk. **What to do:** confirm fresh water is accessible both in a sipper bottle and an open dish; if the animal will not drink voluntarily, offer water from a dropper every hour while contacting a vet; adjust cage temperature if overheating is contributing. **When to call a vet:** any animal with obvious dehydration signs, no improvement with voluntary water access within a few hours, or any animal who is unresponsive.

Cage aggression between males in colony introductions

What you see: chasing, biting, and sustained combat between two intact males being introduced — or between a new male introduction and a resident male in an established colony; wounds on the loser of conflicts; one animal monopolizing the sleeping pouch and excluding the other. **Why:** intact males are territorial, particularly during breeding season, and introductions that are not managed carefully often result in serious bite injuries. Dominant-subordinate dynamics in a mismatched pair can be stable or can escalate. **What to do:** neuter both males if you are housing them together long-term — neutered male pairs cohabit far more peacefully than intact male pairs and also prevent unintended breeding in mixed-sex groups; introduce animals in neutral territory by scent-swapping pouches for one to two weeks before any direct contact; supervise initial cage-sharing for multiple sessions before leaving animals unsupervised. **When to call a vet:** bite wounds that break the skin require cleaning and should be assessed for infection; any wound on the face, genitals, or tail tip should be seen promptly.

Weight loss from diet refusal

What you see: a glider who eats little or none of her nightly BML serving; weight loss on the weekly scale log; in the cage, food remaining in the bowl each morning. **Why:** the most common causes are a new or recently changed diet formulation that smells different from what the glider is accustomed to; a batch made with an ingredient substitution (a different brand of baby food, for example); illness that suppresses appetite; or in newly arrived animals, stress from the move. Diet refusal during the first week in a new home is common and usually resolves on its own. Refusal beyond a week, or weight loss exceeding 10% of body weight, is a husbandry or health concern. **What to do:** verify the batch recipe is unchanged; offer a very small amount of a preferred fruit to

confirm the animal will eat voluntarily; if she accepts fruit but refuses BML, add a small piece of fruit to the top of the BML serving — some gliders will eat into it and discover the BML beneath. **When to call a vet:** weight loss of 10% or more; a glider who refuses all food for more than five days; any concurrent physical symptom.

Quick reference

What you see	Likely cause	What to do	Vet urgency
Wounds on body, tail tip, or genitals — self-inflicted	Lone housing; pain; zinc toxicity	Pair the animal immediately; correct any environmental cause	Same day — emergency
Hindlimb weakness, dragging, soft bones, fracture from minor fall	Metabolic bone disease (Ca:P imbalance)	Correct diet to BML with calcium supplement	Within 24 hours
Moist pink tissue protruding from cloaca	Rectal prolapse	Keep tissue moist; do not push; transport to vet	Same day — surgical emergency
Soft or watery stool, weight loss despite eating	GI parasites (Giardia, Cryptosporidium)	Fecal analysis required; strict hygiene	Within a few days
Nasal discharge, audible breathing, wheezing	Respiratory infection	Correct temperature/drafts; isolate	Within 24–48 hours
Female excessive cloaca-grooming; discharge; joey not emerging	Cloacal or pouch infection	Clean environment; veterinary antibiotic	Within 24 hours
Tented skin, sunken eyes, not drinking voluntarily	Dehydration	Fresh water both formats; dropper offer; cool room	Same day if unresponsive or no improvement
Male-on-male biting; wounds; one animal excluded from pouch	Intact male cage aggression	Neuter; separate until fully healed; managed reintroduction	Wounds that break skin: within 48 hours
BML refused nightly; weight declining on weekly log	Diet refusal from transition, stress, or illness	Verify batch; add fruit topper; confirm no illness	10% weight loss: within a few days

SECTION 9

Gliding & Enrichment

The **patagium** — the thin membrane of skin that runs from the animal's wrist to her ankle on each side — is the structure that defines the sugar glider's body and behavioral repertoire. In the wild, sugar gliders use this membrane to glide distances of up to 150 feet from tree to tree, and the muscular control required to steer, slow, and land is one of the most sophisticated movement skills in any small mammal. In captivity, a glider who never gets to extend that membrane and cover real distance is missing something fundamental. Her physical fitness depends on the muscle use. Her psychological wellbeing depends on the freedom of movement.

In-cage gliding

A well-designed cage with meaningful vertical height provides some gliding opportunity. A glider launched from the top of a 48-inch cage can cover 18 to 24 inches of horizontal distance on a shallow angle — a genuine glide, not just a drop. Arrange two to three high perches so that the angle from one to the intended landing surface is clear of branches and ropes for at least that distance. Watch where your gliders naturally launch from and land, and design the cage furniture to give those zones clear glide lines.

Room-time and supervised free gliding

Three to five times per week, give your gliders supervised out-of-cage time in a **glider-proofed room**. This means: no open windows or doors; all exposed toilet bowls covered; all tight gaps behind furniture assessed (gliders explore behind appliances eagerly and can become trapped); all ceiling fan blades still; all other pets out of the room. A pop-up mesh tent or a dedicated small room is far safer than an open living room until your gliders are fully bonded and reliably return to your hands when called.

During free-room time, let your gliders glide between you and a second person — the 8 to 12 feet of distance between two adults standing apart represents a real and satisfying glide for an animal used to 150-foot glides in the canopy. The more often you participate in this way, the more your gliders associate you specifically with the rewarding experience of free movement, which accelerates bonding meaningfully.

Foraging enrichment

Rotate the cage furniture and foraging props weekly to prevent habituation. Ideas that work reliably: hide a mealworm inside a small rolled fleece scrap; rub a cork piece with fruit juice; hang a fresh eucalyptus or apple branch (not all species are safe — confirm any plant before cage introduction); scatter a few fruit pieces and insects in different locations rather than presenting them in a single bowl; change out one climbing branch per week so the route through the cage is slightly different. Gliders are intelligent animals who learn their cage environment and stop exploring when nothing changes. A cage that changes regularly is a cage that stays interesting.

SECTION 10

Routine Care Calendar

How often	What to do
Daily	Remove and discard last night's food serving by morning; clean the food bowl
Daily	Thaw one to two BML cubes per pair before dusk; place in cage before dark
Daily	Check water — sipper bottle and open dish both full and clean; replace if fouled
Daily	Quick visual of both animals — in the pouch, alert when disturbed at dusk, no visible wounds
Daily	Spot-clean cage floor liner; remove soiled fleece section or patch
Daily	Confirm room temperature is within 70–90°F
Every 1–2 days	Replace full fleece floor liner; rotate clean liner from storage
3 times per week	Offer live or recently killed insects (dubia roaches, mealworms, or crickets) with the nightly BML
Weekly	Weigh each glider on a gram-accurate scale; log and compare to prior week
Weekly	Full inspect of both animals during evening handling; check tail tip, patagium edges, cloaca, pouch (females), and coat condition
Weekly	Wash sleeping pouches in rotation (unscented detergent, no fabric softener); inspect all seams for fraying
Weekly	Scrub food and water dishes thoroughly; dry fully before returning
Every 1–2 weeks	Prepare a fresh batch of BML or HPWBD diet; portion into ice cube trays; freeze
Weekly	Rotate foraging enrichment props; rearrange at least one cage element to vary the environment
Monthly	Full cage wipe-down with dilute unscented vinegar solution or small-mammal-safe disinfectant; dry before replacing liners
Monthly	Inspect all rope perches, branch mounts, and hanging hardware; replace any fraying or stressed elements
Monthly	Photograph both animals for body-condition baseline; compare to the prior month
Annually	Exotic vet wellness examination, including fecal parasite screen and assessment of bone health; discuss reproductive status of any intact pair

SECTION 11

When to See a Vet

Sugar gliders are small animals who can deteriorate from mild concern to serious illness in 24 to 48 hours. When you are not sure whether a symptom warrants a call, make the call. The information the vet needs: current weight, recent diet (batch recipe and any changes), housing setup and temperature, any recent changes to the environment, and what you have observed. If you do not already have an exotic vet who sees marsupials confirmed, do that today — before you need one. A vet number stored in your phone is worth more than any other preparation item on this list.

Go today — same day or emergency:

- Any self-inflicted wounds, regardless of severity — especially on the tail tip, genitals, or chest
- Any prolapsed tissue visible at the cloaca — this is a surgical emergency
- A glider who is unresponsive, completely limp, or cannot be roused during the evening
- Fracture of any limb — bones that break in a small fall indicate underlying MBD and the injury itself needs stabilization
- Any wound that is actively bleeding, appears infected, or shows signs of necrosis
- A female with visible discharge from the pouch or cloaca combined with fever or lethargy
- Any suspected ingestion of a toxic food — chocolate, xylitol, onion family, zinc from cage bars

Book within 24–48 hours:

- Hindlimb weakness, dragging, or decreased grip strength — MBD in progress
- Weight loss of 10% or more between weekly weigh-ins with no dietary explanation
- Soft or persistently watery stool lasting more than 48 hours
- Any audible respiratory change — clicking, wheezing, labored breathing
- A glider who has refused all food for more than five days
- Excessive grooming of any one area — this precedes self-mutilation and is caught more easily at this stage

Confirm before you need them: An exotic vet who sees marsupials is not the same as an exotic vet who sees reptiles or rabbits. Many exotic practices do not have a clinician with sugar glider experience. Call ahead. Ask specifically whether the practice sees marsupials and whether any vet has sugar glider case experience. If not, ask for a referral. The time to find out that your nearest vet does not see gliders is not at 10 pm with a sick animal.

SECTION 12

FAQ

What do sugar gliders eat?

Sugar gliders are omnivores whose nutritional needs cannot be met with commercial sugar glider pellets. The consensus diet among experienced keepers and exotic vets is either the BML (Bourbon's Modified Leadbeater's) recipe — a homemade blend of honey, pureed chicken baby food, mixed fruit baby food, hard-boiled egg, fruit juice, and the Rep-Cal Herptivite and Calcium with Vitamin D3 supplements — or the HPWBD, which uses Wombaroo High Protein Supplement as the protein base. Both are prepared in batches, frozen in ice cube trays, and thawed one to two cubes per pair each night. Three times per week, live or recently killed insects — dubia roaches, mealworms, or crickets — are offered for protein enrichment. Small amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables can supplement up to 25% of the total nightly diet. The calcium supplement is the most critical element in any recipe; chronic calcium deficiency causes metabolic bone disease, which is the most common preventable cause of early death in captive sugar gliders.

How long do sugar gliders live?

With good care — correct diet, housing in a bonded pair, appropriate temperature, and access to an exotic vet — sugar gliders commonly live **10 to 15 years** in captivity. Some well-kept individuals reach 15 years or beyond. Wild sugar gliders live significantly shorter lives due to predation and environmental factors. The most common causes of premature death in captive gliders are metabolic bone disease from improper diet, stress-related illness or self-mutilation from solitary housing, and untreated infections that advance before an owner notices a problem. A sugar glider purchased at a young age is a commitment of over a decade — longer than a cat or dog in many cases — and this deserves careful consideration before purchase.

Can a sugar glider live alone?

No. Sugar gliders are colony animals whose psychological health is deeply dependent on the constant company of other gliders. A lone sugar glider does not adapt over time to solitary living the way some species do. She experiences chronic stress — elevated cortisol, disrupted sleep, suppressed immune function, and in documented cases, self-mutilation severe enough to be fatal. The research and case literature from exotic veterinary practice on this point is unambiguous: solitary housing is harmful, and the harm is not subtle. A single glider who appears "fine" to casual observation is very often a glider who is slowly declining. The absolute minimum social unit is a bonded pair.

What is crabbing in sugar gliders?

Crabbing is the alarm vocalization that sugar gliders produce when frightened, startled, or stressed. It sounds like a continuous, buzzing, insect-like noise — often compared to a locust or a cicada — and can be startlingly loud from such a small animal. It means the glider is frightened, not that it is aggressive or in pain. New gliders in a new home often crab at every approach for the first weeks; with consistent calm handling and daily bonding pouch carry, crabbing typically decreases substantially and eventually occurs only in genuinely alarming situations. When a glider crabs, the correct response is to continue what you are doing calmly and without reaction. Retreating every time a glider crabs teaches the animal that crabbing causes the hand to go away — which it will then do reliably whenever it wants the hand to go away.

Are sugar gliders legal to own?

In Pennsylvania, the Game Commission treats sugar gliders as exotic wildlife and does not allow them to be kept or sold as pets; bills to legalize them, most recently House Bill 692 introduced in 2025, have not passed as of this writing. Sugar gliders are also commonly listed as illegal or restricted in **California, Hawaii and Alaska**, and in some municipalities and counties in other states. This information changes over time as regulations are updated, and expo sellers and some breeders are not always reliable sources of current state law. Before purchasing, check your state fish and wildlife authority's current regulations directly. It is also

worth confirming that any breeder you purchase from holds a current USDA permit if one is required in their state — some states require sellers to carry one, and a seller who does not have one may not be operating legally. The expense and heartbreak of surrendering animals you have bonded with is not worth the shortcut of assuming legality without checking.

Do sugar gliders bond with their owners?

Yes — genuinely and durably. Sugar gliders who are bonded through consistent daily bonding pouch carry and regular calm handling form real attachments to their human keepers. A well-bonded glider will glide voluntarily to her keeper's voice, sleep in a bonding pouch worn against the keeper's skin without distress, and show visible behavioral preference for familiar people over strangers. The bond takes weeks to months to establish and requires daily investment — it is not present at purchase and cannot be rushed. But the payoff is a companion relationship that is qualitatively different from what most people experience with other small mammals. Bonded gliders recognize individual voices, remember their people across absences of days or weeks, and seek human contact rather than merely tolerating it.

What is the BML diet for sugar gliders?

BML stands for Bourbon's Modified Leadbeater's — a homemade diet formulated by the sugar glider keeper community over decades and refined through observation of outcomes and exotic veterinary input. It is named for "Leadbeater's possum mix," an older Australian zoo diet that was adapted for captive sugar gliders. The recipe blends honey, pureed chicken baby food, mixed fruit baby food, hard-boiled eggs, 100% fruit juice, and two Rep-Cal supplements — the Herptivite multivitamin and the Calcium with Vitamin D3 (no phosphorus) — into a smooth liquid that is frozen in ice cube trays and thawed one to two cubes per pair each night. The calcium supplement is the nutritionally critical ingredient; without it, the diet's calcium-to-phosphorus ratio is inverted and metabolic bone disease develops over months. The full recipe with quantities is in the Diet section of this guide.

How big should a sugar glider cage be?

The minimum for two sugar gliders is **24 inches wide × 24 inches deep × 36 inches tall**, with height being the most critical dimension for this arboreal species. A taller cage — 48 inches or more — is meaningfully better and will be fully used by active gliders. Bar spacing must be ½ inch or smaller; gliders escape through wider gaps. The cage should be made of powder-coated wire, not galvanized wire (zinc toxicity risk from bar-chewing), and absolutely not a glass aquarium (ventilation is insufficient). Larger colonies of three or more animals need proportionally more space. Within that space, the cage should be filled with branches, rope perches, and climbing paths at multiple heights so the gliders can navigate the full vertical range continuously — a tall cage with no furniture above mid-height is not much better than a short one.

Are sugar gliders high maintenance?

Compared to most small pets sold in the same retail context, yes — sugar gliders are genuinely high-maintenance, and this should be stated plainly before purchase. The diet requires regular preparation of a homemade recipe rather than pouring from a bag. They must be kept in pairs, which doubles the commitment. Their active hours are 10 pm to 4 am, which requires adapting your evening schedule to their biology. They need daily bonding interaction to remain tame. They require a vet who specifically sees marsupials. They live 10 to 15 years. None of these requirements is impossibly demanding, but collectively they make sugar gliders a poor fit for a household looking for a hands-off or low-time-investment pet. For the right person — someone willing to prepare the diet, carry a bonding pouch daily, and build the relationship over months — the result is a remarkably engaging companion who repays the investment in kind.

Do sugar gliders glide in captivity?

Yes, and it is worth designing your setup to support it. A glider in a cage with meaningful vertical height — 48 inches or more — will glide between high perches during their nightly activity. During supervised out-of-cage time in a glider-proofed room, well-bonded gliders will glide voluntarily between two people standing 8 to 12 feet apart, and this free-gliding time appears to be both physically and behaviorally enriching. The patagium — the membrane from wrist to ankle — requires use to remain in good condition, and gliders who never have the opportunity to extend and use it fully are missing exercise that their body is built

around. Regular room-time gliding is not just entertaining; it is part of keeping these animals in genuinely good health.

Ready to shop? Start with *Critters!*. 10% of every purchase supports no-kill animal shelters. Not sure this is the right pet? Compare your options in our *Small Animal Guide*.

SECTION 13

Every Purchase Gives Back

Before we earn a dime, **10% of every purchase at Walnut Creek Supply goes to no-kill animal shelters across the country.** Not as a round-up prompt at checkout. Not as an optional add-on. Off the top of every order, every day — because responsible animal care and community care are not separate decisions.

Sugar gliders are surrendered to exotic animal rescues in significant numbers every year — most of them are single animals whose owners did not know that solitary housing was harmful, or animals who have been fed commercial pellets for a year or two and are beginning to show the signs of metabolic bone disease that nobody connected to the diet. They are not unadoptable. They are animals who deserved better information from the start and who, given proper care by a keeper who does their homework, can recover and thrive. If you are reading this guide, you are already doing the work those animals never had done for them. If you can adopt rather than purchase — exotic rescues and sugar glider-specific rescues exist in most regions — that choice matters to a lot of small marsupials sitting in cages waiting for someone exactly like you.

We are a family business in Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. We grow our own food, keep our own animals, and stock only what we would put in front of our own pets. **No mystery ingredients.** No commercial pellets sold as a complete diet for an animal they cannot support. If you have a question about your glider's BML batch, her bonding progress, or whether the sound she just made is crabbing or something else, call us at **(717) 983-8069**. We would rather talk you through it.

Welcome to ten to fifteen years of an animal who recognizes your voice, lands on your shoulder from across the room, and sleeps against your heartbeat.

*From our family to yours, **Walnut Creek Supply** — Christiana, Pennsylvania walnutcreeksupply.com*