

# 10 Misconceptions About Sugar Gliders: Debunking The Lies



Sugar gliders make wonderful pets, but it is important to realize that they are exotic animals who require special care. Unfortunately, there is an entire industry of mill breeders who have perpetuated false information about sugar gliders in order to sell more of these animals to unsuspecting owners.

Mill breeders set up kiosks at malls, trade shows, flea markets, and state fairs to market sugar gliders as easy pets to take care of so they can make a quick buck. Impulse buyers fall for the lies, and they end up taking home a pet that they have no idea how to care for.

Often, when people realize that caring for sugar gliders is much more complicated than they were led to believe, they end up abandoning their new pet. Tons of gliders end up being sold

on craigslist or wind up in sugar glider rescues.

Unfortunately, a big part of the problem is that mill breeders have spread elaborate lies about sugar gliders to make people think they are easy pets, similar to gerbils or hamsters.

In reality, sugar gliders are a huge commitment and you will need to educate yourself on how to care for them properly.

There is an entire network of websites that perpetuate lies about sugar gliders, so it is extremely difficult to determine what information is reliable.

Many of these websites appear as though they are official organizations devoted to sugar glider care. Some of these websites have even established by veterinarians who do business with the mill breeders.

You should be wary of any information by a veterinarian who recommends pellet foods as the main component of a sugar glider's diet. Unfortunately, you cannot trust information on the internet just because it was posted by a veterinarian.

When I first became a sugar glider owner, I turned to the internet for advice, and I was overwhelmed by all the contradictory information out there. I almost fell for some of the lies because I mistakenly trusted information posted by what looked like official sources.

I was eventually able to separate the good information from the bad based on my own experiences and intuition.

I put together this report, “**10 Misconceptions About Sugar Gliders: Debunking The Lies,**” to help those of you who are thinking about getting, or already own, sugar gliders learn from some of the mistakes I made by trusting the wrong sources.

Stay tuned to [www.sugarglidersaspets.com](http://www.sugarglidersaspets.com) and my newsletter as I bring you reliable information on sugar gliders about how to care for these exotic animals.

## **Lie #1: Sugar Gliders Are Not Exotic Pets**

Claiming that sugar gliders are not exotic animals makes them seem as though they are easier to take care of. If people think they are easy to take care of, they are more likely to buy them.

You may have read that sugar gliders are considered to be “pocket pets” or “companion pets,” and due to their friendly, loving personalities, they are no longer considered to be exotic. Although sugar gliders have great personalities, that does not mean they are not exotic. The truth is that sugar gliders are exotic animals, and they require special care.

Sugar gliders are marsupials that come from Australia, Tasmania, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. They became popular as pets in the early 1990s. Sugar gliders in the United States were mostly imported from Indonesia, but they are now bred in captivity.

Although sugar gliders are no longer imported from their natural habitat, they are still exotic animals that retain many of their wild instincts. It is important to educate yourself on how to take care of sugar gliders, because they have a lot of special needs.

Mill breeders have even gone as far as renaming sugar gliders and referring to them as “sugar bears” to make them appealing to children. It is not correct to refer to sugar gliders as “sugar bears,” and if you come upon a website that does, it is probably not trustworthy.

Marketing sugar gliders to children is extremely irresponsible. Children simply are not responsible enough to take care of sugar gliders and young children should always be supervised while handling them. If a sugar glider bites a young child, they may accidentally harm them as a natural reaction to being bit.

There are many responsibilities that come with owning a sugar glider. You will need to provide a proper cage and ensure that your glider gets a nutritionally balanced diet. You will need to take your glider to a veterinarian for annual wellness checks and in case of an emergency or illness. These responsibilities are generally too much for a child to handle on their own.

Sugar gliders are nocturnal and require play time at night. Play time is an important aspect of bonding with your sugar gliders. Children are usually in bed when gliders are most active, so their schedule does not make them ideal pets for children.

The bottom line is that sugar gliders are exotic animals and have complicated needs. You should not trust anybody who claims they are easy to take care and are suitable for children.

## **Lie #2: Sugar Gliders Can Thrive On A Pellet-Based Diet**

Diet is the most controversial issue related to sugar glider care. There are many acceptable diets that have been established over the years, but a pellet-based diet is not one of them.

Unfortunately, mill breeders promote a pellet and apple slice diet because they want prospective buyers to think that very little food preparation is necessary. People are more likely to buy a sugar glider on impulse if they think all they have to do is feed pellets and an occasional apple slice.

There are even veterinarians who promote a pellet and apple slice diet, but the key question to ask is whether or not these veterinarians profit from the sale of the pellets they recommend. If you do a little digging around, you will eventually find that they have a financial stake in the pellet food they are promoting.

Yes, sugar gliders may *survive* on a pellet-based diet, but they will not *thrive* and are likely to become sick. Many of the pellet diets lack protein and contain a lot of fillers, so they are not nutritionally balanced.

It is common for gliders on pellet diets to develop metabolic bone disease or hind leg paralysis. Gliders who are fed pellets may also have a dull coat with cracked fur and a flat tail. Once they are fed a proper diet, their coat should return to a healthy non-cracked appearance with a fluffy tail.

A proper diet for sugar gliders should contain 50% protein, 25% fruits, and 25% vegetables. As a sugar glider owner, you will need to prepare nutritionally balanced meals that include fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables.

There are many diets you can follow, and they are pretty easy to prepare. Many can be prepared ahead of time and frozen in ice cube trays for individual portions. If you eat a healthy diet yourself, it is easy to feed sugar gliders with the foods you keep on hand for yourself.

Sugar gliders eat live insects in the wild, so you should incorporate live insects such as mealworms or crickets into their diet. If you are too squeamish, you can substitute other proteins such as lean meats and eggs. However, it is a good source of enrichment to feed them the foods they would normally eat in the wild. Plus, gliders absolutely LOVE live insects!

Although it is not difficult to prepare a proper diet for your sugar glider, it does take some effort. The most important thing to do is to educate yourself on their dietary needs.

Most of the health problems sugar gliders develop are directly related to a poor diet. If you commit to providing a nutritionally balanced diet, you can keep your glider healthy and happy.

### **Lie #3: Sugar Gliders Get Along With Other Pets**

The idea that sugar gliders can bond with your other household pets is extremely dangerous. The truth is that sugar gliders do not get along with dogs and cats.

You should be wary of any website that posts pictures or videos showing sugar gliders interacting with other animals. It is common for sellers at trade shows and malls to show pictures of a glider riding around on a dog's back in order to convince people that they will get along with other pets. This is a highly irresponsible sales tactic and you should avoid anybody who uses it.

There may be rare cases where your other animals leave your sugar glider alone, but in reality, it is much more likely for dogs and cats to injure or kill sugar gliders.

The idea that sugar gliders do not smell like prey is completely false. Dogs and cats are attracted to prey animals that move quickly.

For example, if you've ever seen a dog chase a squirrel, you may have noticed that the dog does not react as long as the squirrel stays frozen in place. As soon as the squirrel starts running, the dog leaps into action and darts after it.

So, if your dog likes to chase squirrels, it is going to do the exact same thing with your sugar glider as soon as it sees your glider move.

If you think your other pets will not harm your glider, it only takes one time for them to prove you wrong. It is much better to be safe than sorry and keep your other household pets separated from your sugar glider at all times.

If you have small pets such as birds or lizards, you should also keep those away from sugar gliders because the gliders will eat them. Gliders are omnivores and will eat small birds and lizards in the wild.

The bottom line is that if you have sugar gliders, you will need to make sure you can keep them separated from any other pets you have at all times.

## **Lie #4: Sugar Gliders Can Be Potty Trained**

Sugar gliders will poop and pee wherever and whenever they want. They cannot be potty trained.

People may tell you they cannot “technically” be potty trained, but you can virtually eliminate all accidents by learning their potty habits. This is not true, but you can minimize some accidents.

Sugar gliders typically poop and pee when they wake up, so you can place a tissue in your hand and hold them to catch any waste before you let them out to play. If they don't go in your hand, try wiping their bottom with the tissue to stimulate them to go. You can also just wait 20 minutes after they wake up before letting them out to play.

However, you need to understand that they are still going to poop and pee after they initially wake up, and there is nothing you can do about it. Their accidents are small and easy to clean up, so it is usually not that big of a deal.

Sugar gliders are territorial and will urinate to mark their territory with their scent. This is completely natural to them and you will not be able to change this behavior. Their cage area will probably smell like urine, and even if you clean it regularly, they tend to just go overboard remarking it to make it “smell right” again.

You may get pooped and peed on when you are playing with your glider. You can take it as a compliment if you get peed on because it means your glider is marking you to claim you as their own. They usually will not go in their pouch, so you can carry them around in a bonding pouch during the day without worrying too much about accidents.

As a sugar glider owner, you just need to accept that gliders cannot be potty trained. They can be messy little animals, and anybody who claims otherwise is probably trying to make them seem easier to take care of.

## **Lie #5: Sugar Gliders Do Not Make A Lot Of Noise**

The truth is that sugar gliders can be quite noisy. Since they are nocturnal, they will be up making noise at night while you are trying to sleep.

You may come across information saying that gliders only make noise when they are distressed, and will only bark due to loneliness or boredom. It is true that gliders will make a crabbing noise when they are in distress, but it is not true that they only bark when they are lonely or bored. Gliders bark for various reasons, because this is how they communicate with each other.

There are also claims that almost all of the noises you hear at night come from toys and other items in the cage, so if you want a quiet house, just get quite toys. It is true that you can cut down on noise by removing noisy toys and by making sure you purchase a quiet exercise wheel, but there are other things gliders do that are noisy.

You will be able to hear your glider climbing and jumping around from one side of the cage to the other. It is also common for gliders to bark at night. All gliders are different, so there is no way to know whether or not your glider will bark a lot at night.

The barking is actually pretty cute, but if you think it would bother you, then don't keep the cage in your bedroom.

## **Lie #6: Sugar Gliders Rarely Bite and Don't Bite Deep**

The claim that sugar gliders rarely bite is not necessarily accurate. The truth is that some sugar gliders are just biters. All gliders are different, and you may end up with a glider that bites a lot. You may also get a glider that never bites.

You may also read that the only exception is gliders who are not properly bonded to their owners. While it is true that un-bonded gliders may bite, there are other reasons that gliders bite.

If you get an older glider that has not bonded to you yet, they may bite you because they are scared. Alpha males may also bite if you approach joeys. Gliders may also bite you if you smell like another glider colony. In the wild, gliders will attack and even kill gliders from other colonies.

Another false claim is that gliders don't bite deep, or that glider bites don't hurt because their teeth point outwards like tweezers. The truth is that glider bites can hurt, and they can puncture your skin.

If you have a glider that bites, you need to be prepared to take the bite. In order to discourage your glider from biting you again, you have to show that you are not intimidated by the bite. If you back off and run away, your glider will know that biting gets the desired result. If you stay calm and don't pull back, you will not reinforce the behavior.

If you have a glider that bites, you should not let young children handle it. A glider bite could be scary to a young child and it could cause the child to react by squeezing or harming the glider by accident.

## **Lie #7: It Is Okay To Get Only One Sugar Glider**

Sugar gliders are colony animals and are not meant to be alone. Although a single glider will probably be okay if you spend enough time with it, it will not thrive the way it would with another glider companion.

It is not good advice to only get one glider if your budget does not allow you to get two. Sellers who encourage you to get one glider are not looking out for the best interest of the glider.

Some sellers may tell you that a glider will bond to you better if you only get one. This is just plain wrong. Gliders will still bond to you when you have more than one. In the wild, gliders live in colonies of up to 7 or more, so they are used to forming bonds in groups.

A seller may tell you it is okay to get one glider as long as you spend as much time with it as possible. It is true that if you only have one glider, you will have to spend more time with it. However, human attention is no substitute for the companionship of their own kind.

Gliders are most active when you are asleep, so they can keep each other company while you are sleeping. If you have a single glider that is used to having you around at all times, it can be very stressful if you ever have to be away from home.

It is very common for gliders to over groom or even self-mutilate due to stress if you ever have to be away for a long period of time. The stress of loneliness leads to depression and can also make them more susceptible to other health problems.

You should never plan to have just one sugar glider. If you are thinking about getting sugar gliders as pets, you should get at least two. The thing to understand is that it is the difference between surviving and thriving. A glider with other glider companions will be so much happier!

## **Lie #8: Heat Rocks Are Safe For Sugar Gliders**

Heat rocks are very dangerous and can kill sugar gliders. Any seller who recommends using a heat rock to keep your sugar glider warm is selling the glider too young. Young joeys who cannot regulate their own body temperature are not ready to be separated from their parents.

When gliders are fully weaned and ready to leave their parents, they will be able to regulate their own temperature and you will have no need for a heat rock.

Heat rocks are actually very dangerous because they can overheat and kill your glider. Some gliders are chewers and if they chew through the electrical cord, they could get electrocuted.

The reason mill breeders separate joeys from their parents too young is because this practice produces more gliders in the long run. The normal weaning period for joeys is 15 weeks, but mills will separate joeys from their moms in as little as 8 weeks. This actually triggers the gliders to produce more joeys.

It is very important for gliders to stay with their parents for the full weaning period because they need that time to learn behaviors from their parents. For example, they will learn how to groom and how to eat solid foods from their parents.

Separating gliders from their parents before they are fully weaned is a practice that is motivated by greed in order to produce more sugar gliders. A responsible breeder would never separate their sugar gliders before the 15 week weaning period, and would never need to recommend using a heat rock.

## **Lie #9: Sugar Gliders Do Not Need A Veterinarian**

The claim that sugar gliders do not need any ongoing health care because they do not need vaccinations and do not carry serious illnesses is false. Although gliders do not need shots, this statement is highly misleading because it implies that you never need to take your glider to a veterinarian. The truth is that you should get annual wellness check ups to make sure your glider is healthy.

There are various health issues that can affect gliders. They can develop serious illnesses, and they will do everything they can to hide it. They retain their wild instincts to hide illnesses because they would be rejected by other members of the colony due to the risk of attracting predators.

You may also read that sugar gliders do not pass illnesses to humans. This is not accurate. Sugar gliders can pass parasites onto humans and other pets such as dogs and cats. For example, gliders can get giardia, and this parasite can be passed onto humans and other animals.

Another misconception is that any veterinarian who works on small mammals, such as gerbils and hamsters, will easily be able to work with sugar gliders. This is not true. Gliders are very different from gerbils and hamsters and require different care. If your sugar glider ever gets sick, it is much better to find a veterinarian who has experience with exotics, including sugar gliders.

Because it can be difficult to find a veterinarian in your area who has experience with sugar gliders, you should find a veterinarian before you get your sugar glider. You should also be sure to find an emergency clinic that accepts sugar gliders as patients. In an emergency, you don't want to waste precious time finding a clinic, because that time could mean the difference between life and death.

## **Lie #10: There Are No Legitimate Sugar Glider Rescues**

The idea that sugar glider rescues are breeders who scam people to resell sugar gliders is completely false. This is one of the worst lies that has been spread because it is an elaborate attempt to cover up the consequences of promoting sugar gliders to impulse buyers.

The truth is that every time a mill breeder sets up shop at a state fair or trade show, there is a huge abandonment problem that follows. You can read more about that in this [news article](#). Selling sugar gliders on the spot to impulse buyers is irresponsible. Anybody thinking about getting sugar gliders should take time to research them first to see if they are willing to commit to owning an exotic animal.

The reality is that tons of sugar gliders across the country are abandoned by people once they realize taking care of them is more complicated than they thought. Sugar glider rescues do exist and they are not disguised breeders trying to resell sugar gliders. Once a rescue is taken in, it is rehabilitated and re-homed. There may be an adoption fee, but this is to cover veterinarian and neutering costs.

The idea that sugar glider rescues scam people into giving up their gliders just so they can resell the gliders is absurd. Most rescues actually try to convince people not to get sugar gliders unless they are absolutely sure they can handle the responsibilities. Glider rescues are usually underfunded and are definitely not aiming to make a profit.

Any claim that there are no non-profit sugar glider rescues is not true. [Suggie Savers](#), [Lucky Glider Rescue & Sanctuary](#), and [SouthEast Sugar Gliders Rescue and Sanctuary](#) are some examples of sugar glider rescues that are non-profit 501(c)3 corporations.

You may have read that you can call your local animal shelter and they will tell you they have never had a sugar glider in their shelter. The truth is that regular animal shelters are not equipped to deal with sugar gliders and they refer gliders to rescues set up specifically to take care of sugar gliders. It takes somebody who is devoted to sugar glider care and knows how to rehabilitate these animals after they have been mistreated.

If you are thinking about getting a sugar glider, it is better to adopt a sugar glider who needs a home. There are rescues all over the country who can match you up with gliders who need new forever homes. If you buy sugar gliders from pet shops, mall kiosks, trade shows, or state fairs, you are supporting the mill breeders.

## **Closing Remarks**

I hope you enjoyed reading this report. It is shocking to see how much false information has been spread about sugar gliders, but I hope this has helped separate fact from fiction.

Sugar gliders are great pets, and if you decide to become a sugar glider owner, I hope you will continue to research these wonderful animals.

It is very important to learn as much as you can about sugar gliders before jumping in and getting them as pets. They require special care, so you will need to educate yourself in order to take care of them properly.

There is a lot of information on the Internet, and it can be difficult trying to figure out what is reliable. I have put together the most reliable information into one comprehensive guide that goes over everything you need to know to take care of your pet sugar gliders.

You can learn more about it by clicking here: [Sugar Glider Care Guide](#).