

Vitamins A and D Asked For Nonfat Dry Milk

➤ AMERICAN families on relief are not getting the proper vitamins in the nonfat dry milk that takes the place of fluid whole milk in their diet.

It will take an amendment by Congress to a 1944 law to permit fortification with vitamins A and D of all nonfat dry milk, the AMA's council on food and nutrition points out in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Some nonfat dry milk going overseas in the Food for Peace program already is fortified with vitamins A and D through cooperation between the Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

With serious nutritional problems existing in many areas of the world, emergency food relief programs of many kinds have made significant inroads, the council pointed out. The availability of surplus farm commodities cannot be considered justification for their inclusion in relief programs, however, unless the foods meet the specific needs of the recipient population.

It has become commercially feasible to fortify dry milk with vitamins without affecting its taste or stability, the council said.

"An existing nutritional deficiency can be made more grave by supplementing a diet with foods lacking the nutrient in short supply," the council explained. "Quiescent inadequacies can become full-blown deficiencies if additional protein, minerals and calories are provided in the absence of adequate vitamin intake. This could be anticipated with both vitamins A and D."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration agrees that vitamins A and D are needed in nonfat dry milk, which means that the 1944 U.S. Public Health Service Milk Code would have to be revised by Congress.



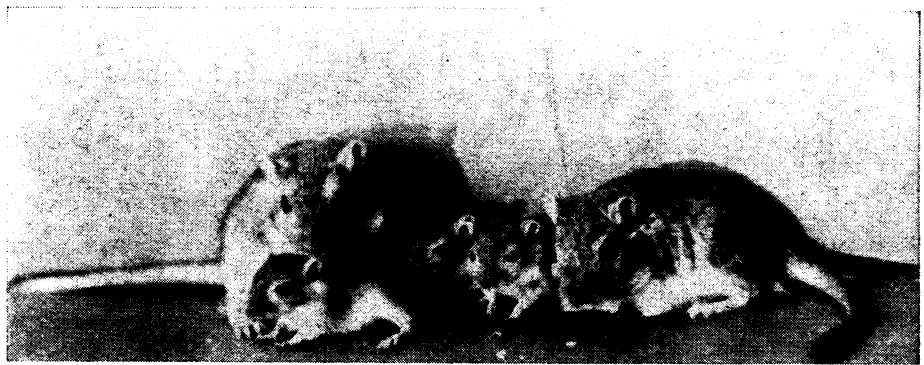
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Gerbils Make Good Pets

➤ GERBILS are friendly, gentle members of the rodent family rapidly becoming popular family pets in the American home.

With bright, black eyes, and a slightly furry tail, they have an alert and friendly nature that is making them more desirable than slow-moving hamsters, long a classroom or home pet.

Wild gerbils—pronounced jur-bils—naturally live in the dry sandy or clay deserts, bush country and arid steppes ranging throughout northern Africa, central Asia and Asia Minor. In 1954, a small colony of the creatures was brought to the United States, primarily for medical research.

Scientists soon discovered the little animals are just too curious to do well in laboratory experiments, where they are supposed to find and learn the shortest route through a maze.

Even when hungry, they stop to investigate every pathway instead of running directly to food.

Scientifically known as *Meriones unguiculatus*, gerbils are also called "pocket kangaroos" because of their strong hind legs and leaping ability, and also because they like to stand up on their hind legs, much like a kangaroo.

From long centuries of living in the desert, gerbils have developed an unusual water metabolism.

They can go for long periods of time without drinking, obtaining their water from the food they eat, mostly dry seeds and grain, but also grass and roots when they can find them.

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These hardy creatures have also retained another trait from their ancient life in the deserts, where the sun beats intensely during the day and at night temperatures drop to bitter cold. Gerbils have a remarkable ability to regulate their body temperatures so they can withstand high temperatures without discomfort.

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