

Care & Information Sheet

Hamster



Hamsters are nocturnal animals so they are active at night and rest during the day. With proper care and nutrition they will live 2-3 years. There are many different types of hamsters: short-haired, long haired, European, Black and Dwarf hamsters. The average size of a hamster is 4-5 inches with dwarf hamsters being 3-4 inches. They are known as hoarders and often stuff their cheeks with food, moving it from one place to another. Hamsters are easy to handle but may nip if suddenly awakened from a nap or startled. They are best kept as individual pets, especially adults. Dwarf hamsters have a very high energy level and will exercise 3-4 hours per night.

Habitat

- As large as possible glass, metal cage, or plastic habitat. It should be escape proof and have a solid floor.
- There should be plenty of room for the hamster to exercise and play. Wheels are highly recommended.
- They will do well in the average household temperature. Avoid extreme temperature changes and you should never keep their habitat in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
- Clean the habitat and its contents at least once a week with mild soap and water, rinse, and allow to dry completely before placing the hamster back into the habitat.

Bedding

- 1–2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat.
- Proper bedding includes hardwood shavings and a pelleted or recycled product.
- Cedar-based products are not recommended as they may cause harm to your new pet.
- Wet bedding should be removed daily. Provide all new bedding once a week.

Food & Water

- High-quality hamster food and small amounts of grains, fruits & vegetables and timothy hay.
- Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake.
- Do not feed chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions.
- Small amounts of grains, fruits & vegetables can be offered as a treat but should be discarded if not consumed within 24 hrs.
- Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily.

Grooming and Hygiene

- Hamsters stay clean and rarely need baths but can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth if necessary.
- It is normal for a hamster's teeth to be yellow. Cleaning is not necessary.
- Chew sticks should always be provided to maintain incisor teeth, which grow continuously.

Supplies

Habitat	Water Bottle	Timothy Hay
Bedding	Food Dish	Chew Sticks
Exercise Toys -Wheel	Quality Food	Book about Hamsters
Hiding Place	Vitamins	

Health

Because all hamsters are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your hamster and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of diseases.

You should consult with an exotic animal veterinarian if you observe any of the following conditions.

- Diarrhea or loose stools - caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness.
- Diabetes – Frequent urination and lethargy.
- Malocclusion - Overgrown teeth which may need to be trimmed regularly.
- Mites - External parasites that cause the hamster to lose patches of hair.

For information regarding hamsters and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets>

NOTE: The information contained in this document is for general reference only. Please consult a veterinarian for medical advice and concerns.

Sources:

Choosing a Small Mammal by Dennis Kelsey-Wood
The ASPCA Complete Guide to Pet Care by David L. Carroll