

# HAMSTER CARE



## Please Consider...



### Who will be the primary caretaker?

As small prey animals who are easily injured, hamsters do not make ideal pets for young children. They prefer a quiet environment and will nip/bite if mishandled.



### If you have a dog, cat or other predator, do you have a safe space for a hamster to live?



### Are you willing and able to provide veterinary care for your hamster?



## FUN FACTS: Hamsters!

The word "hamster" comes from the German word "Hamstern," which means hoarding.

**Hamsters are nocturnal:** they sleep during the daytime and play at night!

Hamster teeth are yellow or orange. White teeth are a sign of illness.

## HANDLING & SOCIALIZATION

Keep in mind that hamsters are small prey animals, and need time to trust you! Syrians tend to be more trusting, while Roborovskis tend to be more nervous and less likely to tolerate handling. It is normal for most hamsters to bite until you gain their trust.

When you want to pick up your hamster to clean his cage or interact, start by using a paper cup that you place sideways with a bit of food in it. Then place the cup in the temp housing or your hand and gently turn the cup on its side. Eventually, you may be able to get your hamster to walk onto your outstretched hand. Always interact with your hamster close to the floor.

### Socialization Tips:

- Leave your **hamster alone** during the middle of the day, when he is trying to sleep.
- **Gain your hamster's trust** by talking gently to him, especially when you give him food.
- Pet your hamster gently on the back when he's eating.
- Get him **used to your scent:** rub a small piece of tissue or paper towel on your skin, then put it in his cage.
- Use a **"training box"** outside the cage. This could be any box with straight, smooth walls and an open top, giving you better access to handle your hamster. You can then **reward him** with bits of food for positive behaviors.

**Hamster balls** are controversial because it's easy to injure the hamster if a human or animal plays with or bumps into the ball. **Safer options** are a cardboard maze placed in a lined bathtub, or another good quality wheel or more climbing tubes.

## THINGS TO GET FOR YOUR HAMSTER

### SPACIOUS CAGE (Syrian, most Dwarf breeds)

or glass aquarium with a secure mesh lid (Roborovskis)

**BEDDING** unscented paper or aspen litter

Commercial **HAMSTER FOOD** (see diet recommendations)

**WHEEL** silent spinner or other solid kind (appropriate size for your hamster)

**WATER BOTTLE** (appropriate size for your hamster)

**SMALL CERAMIC DISH** for food

Wooden **NESTING BOX**, untreated wood **CHEW TOYS**

Distilled white vinegar for **CLEANING**

### DO NOT Buy:

Plastic sided bins or food dishes (hard to sanitize and harbor odor)

Wire mesh wheels (they can injure paws)

Commercial treats high in fat and sugar

"Fluffy" bedding (causes GI blockages)

Litters unsafe for hamsters (pine or cedar, corn cob, cat litter).



### SYRIAN

Up to 6", must be kept ALONE, recommended for ages 9 and up with adult supervision.



### DWARF

2-3", can live with others of same sex, recommended for ages 12 and up with adult supervision.



### ROBOROVSKI

under 2", extremely fast, can live with others of same sex, not good for handling or kids.

# HOUSING

**SYRIAN** hamsters must be housed singly. **DWARF** hamsters \*may\* get along with other hamsters of the same sex, particularly if they are siblings. Males and females should be housed separately to prevent health issues and babies (up to 13 per litter!).

**NEVER house different breeds of hamsters together!** It is cruel and hamsters will die from stress and injuries.

Housing for all hamsters should be indoors, away from direct sunlight, drafts, and safe from predators. **Optimum temperature range for hamsters is 65°-75°.** Hamsters become ill if temperatures drop too low. On hot days, place ice cubes in a ceramic dish.

**Wire cages** with **solid floors** are recommended for Syrian and most Dwarf hamsters. **SYRIANS** need a minimum space of 20"x30" while most **DWARF** hamsters need 12"x15". **ROBOROVSKIS** need a minimum 20-gallon aquarium with a secure wire top.

*If you have more than 1 hamster in a cage, provide at least 2 appropriate-sized wheels.*

## CAGE CLEANING

Remove **wet spots** in your hamster's cage every other day, and you'll only need to clean the cage once a week.

Water bottles or dishes should be **cleaned daily** to prevent mold and bacterial buildup.

- 🐾 Place your hamster in a bin with some bedding.
- 🐾 Remove bedding from the cage and set aside a small amount to retain your hamster's scent.
- 🐾 Wash all housing using a 50/50 mixture of distilled white vinegar and water, followed by a drop of dish soap.
- 🐾 Rinse and dry thoroughly.
- 🐾 Add new bedding to a depth of several inches so that your hamster can dig a burrow and tunnel.
- 🐾 Place the bedding you set aside back in with the new bedding.

# VETERINARY CARE

Find a veterinarian experienced in treating hamsters, and have contact information on hand in case of emergencies. Contact your vet immediately any time you notice a change in health, behavior or appearance.

### Look for:

- Abscesses and lumps
- Blocked scent glands
- Hair loss
- Skin conditions
- Teeth problems
- Broken limbs
- Respiratory infections/sneezing
- Diarrhea or other digestive issues

# DIET

**Hamsters need access to clean water 24/7.**

**WATER:** Make sure the water bottle is working (*the water level goes down*) and that your hamster can reach the water bottle. As your hamster ages, you may have to switch to a ceramic water dish.

**FOOD:** Hamsters require a **high-quality commercial food** (at least 18% crude protein). Avoid sugar-filled commercial treats, too much sugar can lead to obesity and diabetes.

**FRESH FOOD:** Supplement your hamster's dry food diet with small amounts of fresh foods twice a week. A **DWARF** hamster would get a piece slightly bigger than its paw. A **SYRIAN**, or larger hamster, would get a piece the size of a flattened metal bottle cap.

Fruits and vegetables high in sugar should only be given occasionally (*no more than 1x every 2 weeks*) as a treat.

Dwarf hamsters are especially prone to diabetes and should therefore never be fed fruits with high sugar content



## YES FOODS!

Apple (*seeds removed*)  
Basil  
Bell Pepper  
Cantaloupe  
Carrot

Greens: Bok Choy, Kale  
Mango  
Oats  
Sunflower Seeds

## Do NOT Feed!

Avocado  
Lettuces  
Onions & Garlic  
Raw Potato  
Human JUNK Foods

