



Owning and Caring For Hamsters

Hamsters are the most common pet rodent. These hardy and easy to care for critters can make a good “first pet” for children, but this small pet is still a big responsibility. Hamsters are cuddly, cute, clean creatures that like to sleep the day away and then have a heavy aerobic workout during the night. If you’re a night-owl type, a hamster might be your ideal companion.

Facts:

- Lifespan 1.5-3 years
- They are nocturnal
- Can grow to 2-7 inches in length and weigh 1-7 ounces
- They have scent glands
- Expandable cheek pouches allow easy storage of food
- Gestation (pregnancy) about 16-21 days
- Average litter size 4-8 pups

Common Problems:

- Diabetes
- Tumors
- Glaucoma/Cataracts
- Heart disease
- Overgrown teeth
- Diarrhea
- Hair loss, itching, mites
- Upper respiratory infection

Preventative Care:

- Complete physical exam every 6-12 months
- Examination within 48 hours of purchasing
- Yearly fecal exam to check for parasites
- Annual blood work to monitor organ function
- Routine dental exam

DIET ESSENTIALS

Your hamster should be provided with enough food each day to fill both cheek pouches (approximately 8-15g). Their bowl should be filled with fresh food daily. Food should not be offered in plastic dishes as they often chew through them. Hamsters are known for being hoarders, so yours will keep a private stash. Fresh water should always be available via water bottle, even though your hamster may not drink much at all. Seed mixtures allow for your hamster to be picky and select the more tasty, less healthy items, so they should be fed a high-quality, prepared hamster pelleted alfalfa diet. The diet is supplemented with small amounts of hay, grains, seeds, vegetables, and fruits. You may offer your hamster kale, collard greens, dog biscuits, zucchini, shredded cheese, carrots, papaya, banana, mango, apples, berries, melon, corn, peas, broccoli, squash, cooked egg/meat, bread, cottage cheese, rice, spinach, asparagus, cauliflower, celery, cooked pasta, and much more!

Vitamin	Symptom of Deficiency	Natural Source
A	Diarrhea, lack of growth	Carrots, dandelions, green vegetables, hay
B	Diarrhea, lack of growth	Wheat germ, yeast, meat, liver
C	Swollen joints, scruvy	Fresh fruits and veggies
D	Rickets	Fish liver oils, wheat germ, green veggies
E	Skin disorders, reproductive issues	Wheat germ, green veggies

*NOTE: Vitamin B effects the nervous system and a regular small amount is effective in treating stress, one of the primary contributions in many diseases especially wet tail.



- Almonds
- Apple Seeds
- Canned food
- Chocolate/Candies
- Chips and Junk food
- Pork Products
- Potatoes (Raw)
- Raw Kidney Beans
- Eggplant
- Grape Seeds
- Avocado
- Raw Rhubarb
- Tomato leaves
- Citrus Fruits
- Watermelon
- Jams and jellies
- Spices
- Garlic/Onions/Leeks
- Scallions/Chives
- Pickles



Helpful Hint: Add some bedding from your hamster's old home into your new habitat for a smoother transition.

Behavior

Hamsters acquired their name from the German word for "hoarder". They are well-known and sought after for their docile and inquisitive nature, but just like any creature, if they feel threatened they may try to bite.

These nocturnal creatures require daily handling in order to keep him/her friendly and accustomed to people. The best way to pick up a hamster that may bite is by coaxing them into the palm of your hand, a cup, or even a toilet paper roll with a treat and gently "pouring" it into your hand. Try to avoid picking up a hamster that is sleeping, occasionally they can be grumpy when awoken and attempt to bite. They tend to be solitary and territorial creatures, so it is best to house them individually, unless you are breeding.

Exercise

Hamsters require a significant amount of exercise in order to remain happy and healthy. You may want to purchase a running wheel for the cage or a hamster ball. In a wheel or ball your hamster may amuse itself for extended periods of time. It is important that upon purchasing one of these items, you make sure they are the appropriate size for your pet. Your hamster should not have to arch his/her back as he/she runs. Another thing to remember is that the wheel should be solid plastic, not a wire wheel. Wire wheels are dangerous and may lead to injuries. Also, you should never leave your pet unsupervised in an exercise ball.

Environment

Find a location for your hamster's habitat that is away from windows and secluded from your other family pets, especially cats and dogs. The best cage choice for your hamster is a wire cage (for good ventilation) and a solid plastic bottom (to contain bedding and protect your hamster's feet). The bottom should be generously covered with a couple inches of bedding, perfect for burrowing. Bedding made from paper products are the safest, and you can even make your own at home using a shredder. Clumping litters, pine, and cedar bedding should all be avoided as they may be harmful.

Hamster habitats composed of interlocking plastic tubes look very appealing, however, these are very difficult to clean and your hamster could potentially get stuck inside one. A water bottle should be placed on the side of the cage, and food should be offered in a couple of ceramic dishes. Plastic dishes tend to get chewed up by our furry friends.

You should spot clean the bedding weekly, and thoroughly clean the cage monthly.

