

Hamster Care Sheet

Because we care !!!



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Your Pets Super Store



Congratulations on your new pet. Hamsters make delightful family pets. They sleep during the day and become active in the evening, ideal for many family schedules. Most hamsters, including Syrian hamsters, are solitary and must be kept alone. Occasionally, Dwarf hamsters may be social and prefer to live in pairs or groups, however you should have an extra cage available in case they need to be separated.

GENERAL

Hamsters have a very good sense of smell and hearing, but their eyesight is poor. It is very important to keep this in mind when you get a new hamster. Allow your pet a few days to get used to its new home before you try to pick it up. Most hamsters are easy to handle once they recognize your smell and know they can trust you. Hamsters enjoy some out of cage time but care must be taken as they are small and fast. A hamster ball is a great way to watch your hamster explore and not get lost as long as stairs are blocked off and any large pets are not in the area. A small animal playpen will also allow you to enjoy watching your hamster play with some of its toys. Startling a sleeping hamster can frighten it and cause it to bite. Offering food from your hand helps to build confidence. Too much stimulation is stressful and can quickly lead to illness. Hamsters can also be stressed by high pitched sounds and vibrations. Young children will need adult supervision through the acclimation process. It is best to allow your hamster to wake up on its own, have a snack and go to the bathroom before you take it out of its cage.

HOUSING

There are several manufacturers offering cages suitable for hamsters. Hamsters are active animals and need plenty of space. An easy way to provide adequate space is to connect several smaller cages with tunnels. Add a sleeping house, filled with nesting material like shredded paper or hay, and choose toys such as a wheels, ladders, and ramps. Clean up can be simplified by adding a "potty" corner or room to their favorite corner. Hamsters love burrowing in a deep layer of safe bedding such as Aspen shavings or Carefresh. Avoid aromatic cedar beddings as the oils can be irritating to skin and sinuses. Since hamsters sleep during the day the cage should be in a quiet location away from direct sunlight and other household pets that may harass it. Hamsters should be kept in temperatures between 60-77 degrees fahrenheit.

DIET

A healthy diet is based on dry plant food consisting of pellets and seed blends. We carry many different brands of hamster food; consult one of our care specialists for help in selecting the

DIET - continued

food to keep your hamster healthy. Generally, two teaspoon of dry food per day, as well as some dry hay. Avoid sweets, salted nuts, cookies, cabbage, onions and fruits and vegetables high in acid. Hamsters are omnivores and though most people keep them on a vegetarian diet, they can also eat foods such as meal worms in very small quantities. Fresh fruits and vegetables should be avoided as too much can cause diarrhea. Hamsters are hoarders and hidden wet food can become moldy, which can lead to illness and bad odors. There are a lot of treats specifically formulated for your hamster. Fresh water should always be available in a sipper bottle.

CLEANING

Check the food dish and water bottle, daily. Leave the hoarded dry food but remove any fresh food in the cage and the sleeping house. Clean the "potty" corner and any other damp or dirty spots and add fresh bedding. Once a week, remove the seed dish and water bottle and clean with hot water, use a bottle brush to clean inside the water bottle. Do not use soap. Clean the cage thoroughly. Put your hamster in it's travel cage or a bucket with some of the bedding. Remove all food and bedding. Use hot water to clean the bottom tray; you can use a little vinegar or special pet disinfectant for stubborn residues. Rinse all plastic and ceramic items with hot water and wipe off the cage bars. Use a brush to clean items that could absorb water. Make sure everything is dry, then add fresh bedding two inches deep. Put a small amount of old bedding into the sleeping house so your hamster will recognize its home.

HEALTH

Be alert and consult one of our pet care specialists or a veterinarian if you notice signs of illness or injury such as: lack of droppings or soft droppings; excessive drinking or urinating; dirty, wet or patchy fur; sneezing, wheezing or runny nose; limping, cuts, bumps or bleeding from any opening. Hamsters (as with all rodents) teeth grow constantly throughout their life span and therefore need to be provided with a means to condition their teeth. Products such as Kaytee Treat Sticks, Super Pet Apple Sticks, and Cheesy Mineral Chews are examples of good safe treats.

FERTILITY

Separate Syrian hamsters according to their sex by three weeks of age to avoid health risks and unwanted babies. Males and females should not be housed together. Dwarf hamsters can produce babies every three weeks if males and females are not kept apart.

BOOKS

Hamsters

Barron's

CHECK LIST

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| _____ cage with enough space to keep your hamster busy | _____ safe chew items such as apple sticks, mineral chews small wooden houses (Trixie) |
| _____ sleeping house | _____ Carefresh, aspen or pine bedding |
| _____ potty house (optional) | _____ Kaytee Hamster Blends and timothy or orchard hay |
| _____ water bottle and food bowl | _____ hamster ball or covered playpen for safe out of cage exercise |
| _____ bottle brush | _____ cage cleaner |
| _____ toys for exercise such as wheels and ladders | |
| _____ salt wheel | |