



**Guide to
caring for your
Hamster**



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Hamsters

The hamster is a species of small rodent, belonging to the family Cricetidae. There are 24 species of hamster, some of them dwarf, originating in the wild from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, China and Siberia.

The most common type of hamster in captivity is the Syrian, or Golden Hamster.¹ Other ones kept in captivity include the Chinese, or Striped, Hamster; the European Hamster; and the Djungarian, hairy footed or Russian Hamster.

- There are four main types of Dwarf Hamsters: Russian Campbell, Russian Winter White, Roborovski and Chinese.
- In the wild, Syrian hamsters may travel up to 10km in one night! So they have lots of energy and stamina, which is why they need plenty of opportunity to exercise and play.
- Syrian hamsters are solitary and are one of the few pets that need to be kept on their own.
- Hamsters are nocturnal. In the wild, this helps them avoid predators and the heat of the day.
- They are most commonly active at dawn and dusk.
- They can communicate by ultrasonic sound signals.

¹ Source PFMA

General Information

Birth weight: 2-5g

Adult weight:

Males 85-140g, Females 95-120g

Young: Pups

Sexual Maturity: 6-8 weeks

Pregnancy: 15-18 days

Litter size: 4-12

Weaning age: 21 days

Life Expectancy: 1.5-3 years

(Based on a Syrian or Golden Hamster)

Pet Hamsters

Hamsters are often sold to parents as a “great pet for kids”, but this isn’t necessarily the case. In fact, they are better pets for adults or older children and teenagers.

Being nocturnal, they may be less inviting to play with and less interactive for small children who want to play during the day.

Hamsters take longer to socialise than other animals. This means that they can be nippy for a while, but once accustomed, hamsters can make friendly pets, but it’s the socialising that’s the key.

The nutrition your Hamster needs

WATER

Hamsters should always have access to fresh clean water, which can be supplied either in a bowl or a drinker/water bottle. Water bottles should be suitable for hamsters who can sometimes struggle with the traditional ball stopper bottles.

The water should be changed on a daily basis.

Vitamin supplements should not be added to the water, as this can lead to an overgrowth of bacteria unless strict hygiene is maintained.

FOOD

Hamsters should have access to a daily portion of nuggets to ensure that they receive the vitamins and minerals they need. Hamsters are omnivorous and have an average food intake of 11-14g of food per day. They need a minimum of 16% protein in their diet and a fat level of 4-5%. Given the opportunity, hamsters will selectively feed, so a complete diet, mostly made of nuggets, will help prevent this.

FRUIT & VEGETABLES

Hamsters enjoy a balanced diet of fresh fruit and vegetables such as Apples, Asparagus, Basil, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cantaloupe Melon, Carrots and Carrot Tops, Cauliflower Leaves and Stalks, Celery, Chicory, Chinese Parsley, Coriander, Cucumber, Dill, Garden Cress, Grapefruit, Gooseberries, Honeydew Melon, Kale, Kiwi Fruit, Mangoes, Oranges, Parsley, Parsnips, Peas, Red Cabbage, Red Chard, Romaine Lettuce, Savoy Cabbage, Spinach, Strawberries, Tangerines, Tomatoes, Turnips and Water Cress.

SNACKS

Hand feeding snacks is an excellent way to bond with your hamster. Avoid feeding sugary treats as this can lead to obesity and other health issues. Try feeding small amounts of fresh greens and fruits as a snack.

You can also offer insects such as mealworms or locusts

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES TO AVOID

Some vegetables are bad for Hamsters such as Potato and Potato Tops, Rhubarb and Rhubarb Leaves and Tomato Leaves.

Please note this is not a complete list so always check if you are unsure



5 Welfare Needs of Hamsters

1. Suitable environment

In the wild, hamsters live in burrows that they excavate, chewing through roots to make their passageways.

Housing

Hamsters will chew their way through anything. Wood houses, for example, are not a good idea as they chew the wood and can end up with splinters and may escape. However metal houses can be too cold for them, so a plastic house is the one to go for and, ideally, it should be constructed on multiple levels. Plastic cages with bars are better than smooth ones as they allow hamsters to climb, which they really enjoy. Hamsters are very inquisitive, gnawers and escapologists and so will look for ways to escape from their housing.

Houses
Use a plastic house, ideally constructed on multiple levels

They should have access to an area for exercise on a daily basis.

Lining

Line the floor of their house with shavings and some nest material such as shredded paper. Check the nest area regularly for old food that has been hoarded and make sure that there is always clean, fresh bedding available. They will defend their nest strongly and so should never be picked up directly from the nest.

Cleaning

Clean their house every two weeks. Hamsters will usually choose one area to urinate in, this spot should be cleaned regularly. However they are very territorial, therefore their house should not be cleaned out too often.

Location

When the temperature drops below 4-5°C, hamsters will hibernate so it's a good idea to keep them in the house where the temperature is more constant and remember to keep them out of reach of other pets too.

2. A proper diet including fresh water

A 100% diet of complete hamster food, such as Nature's Feast, is sufficient for hamsters. You can feed your hamster the occasional treat and should always provide clean fresh water every day.



3. Ability to express normal behaviour

When hamsters are not sleeping or eating, they like to be active and so need to be able to play and exercise.

Provide plenty of toys to keep them busy during their active period. Tubes are good fun and purposely made wooden objects are ideal for them to gnaw on. They enjoy a wheel but be careful if your hamster is long-haired, as we don't want them to trap their coat!

A hamster ball is a good way for them to explore and exercise outside of their housing, it's one of the safest methods. If they are loose then they are very hard to find.

4. Companionship and other pets

Roborovski and both Russian varieties of hamsters are extremely sociable. Aim for a pair or group of the same sex – otherwise you will end up with more hamsters than you started with!

Syrian hamsters enjoy human contact, but they won't get on with other Syrian hamsters so will need to be housed on their own. Chinese hamsters are prone to fighting. If this happens you must house them separately.

5. Protection from and treatment of illness and injury

As hamsters have prominent eyes in shallow sockets, problems involving the eyes are common and they are at risk from corneal ulcers.

If hamsters are handled inappropriately or scuffed too tightly the eyes can come out from the sockets.

Wet tail is a disease which affects a hamster's intestine and cause it to become inflamed. Signs of wet tail include loss of appetite, lethargy, weakness and diarrhoea. If wet tail is suspected then quick veterinary intervention is important. There are usually underlying factors causing stress, such as rehoming, changes in diet or overcrowding.

It is important to ensure hamsters are kept at their ideal bodyweight and not allowed to gain weight excessively.



Common Hamster Breeds

There are many breeds of hamster to choose from, all of which differ in colour, shape and size.



The Syrian, or Golden Hamster is the most common type of hamster in captivity

Syrian or Golden Hamster



Chinese Hamster



Roborovski Hamster



Health and Wellbeing of your Hamster

Health checks are important for you Hamster. Owners should develop a routine to do this regularly...



Regular health checks

- ✓ **Attentive and alert**
- ✓ **Eyes:** Clear bright and alert
- ✓ **Ears:** Clean, dry and free from discharge
- ✓ **Nose:** Clean, dry and free from discharge
- ✓ **Teeth:** Front teeth should meet correctly
- ✓ **Coat:** Clean, free from knots, matting or bald spots. Should also be free from parasites such as fleas, mites or ticks
- ✓ **Bottom:** Clean and dry
- ✓ **Healthy weight (Syrian Hamster):** Between 85 - 140g for Males and 95 - 120g for Females
- ✓ **Good appetite:** Hamsters should eat 11-14g of quality nuggets with occasional fresh greens and snacks



Signs to look out for

- ⚠ Subdued and not active/interacting as they would normally
- ⚠ Discharge from eyes, ears or nose
- ⚠ Swollen or bulging eyes
- ⚠ Over grown teeth, drooling or blood coming from the mouth
- ⚠ Laboured breathing
- ⚠ Changes in coat/matting/bald patches
- ⚠ Parasites such as fleas, mites or ticks
- ⚠ Reduced appetite
- ⚠ Weight gain or loss
- ⚠ Swollen abdomen
- ⚠ Change in droppings consistency and shape
- ⚠ Wet, sticky, dirty bottom
- ⚠ Swollen limbs and/or limping

A proper diet is essential for the health of your hamster

If you are concerned about the health of your hamster consult a VET

With natural ingredients that bring out your Hamsters personality

Hamster Nugget, Fruit & Veg Mix

A healthy and tasty blend of nuggets, fruit and veggies for variety and stimulation.

Our food should be fed alongside occasional fresh greens and snacks.

Feeding guide

A complete food for adult hamsters.

Daily amount of food per Hamster

11 - 14g	1 dessert spoon
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Specially blended to:

- Add variety and interest
- Encourage foraging behaviours
- Help digestion
- Stimulate the senses

Snack Selection

A selection of three snack pots for Small Animals in easy to store containers.

- Fruit Garden
- Vegetable Patch
- Flower Garden

with vegetables for natural GOODNESS

Encourages FORAGING

Natural prebiotics from CHICORY

LINSEED for Omega 3

Rich in PROTEIN

