

Hamster Care

General

Hamsters make delightful family pets. They sleep during the day and become active in the evening, ideal for most busy families. Many hamsters, including Syrian hamsters, are solitary and must be kept alone. Occasionally, dwarf hamsters may be sociable and prefer to live in pairs or groups; however you should have an extra cage available in case they need to be separated.

Most hamsters are easy to handle once they learn to trust you. Allow your new pet a few days to settle into its new home before picking it up. Offering food from your hand helps to build confidence. Regular exercise in a safe area outside the cage is important, but wait for your hamster to wake up on its own, have a snack, and go to the toilet before you take it out of its cage. Never wake a sleeping hamster as it will probably bite!

Housing

Syrian hamsters need a cage about 24 x 16 x 12 in, with a solid bottom and a wire top. An easy way to provide adequate space is to connect several smaller cages with Habitrail type tunnels. Add a sleeping house, filled with nesting material like shredded paper or hay, and choose toys such as a solid wheel (no open rungs), ladders, and ramps. Avoid aromatic cedar and pine beddings. Dwarf hamsters are safer in a large aquarium or specially designed cage, as they may squeeze through standard cage bars.

Diet

A healthy diet is based on dry food consisting of pellets and a small amount of seeds, check with a reputable pet store or your vet for a suitable mix. Provide a selection of fresh vegetables or fruit most days but only in tiny amounts. Hamsters are omnivores and though most people keep them on a vegetarian diet, they can also eat foods such as nuts, mealworms, yogurt, cottage cheese, tofu and lean cooked meat. However any additional food should be given sparingly and in very small amounts. Fresh water should always be available in a clean bottle.

Cleaning

Spot-clean soiled areas daily and wash the cage bottoms with an animal safe disinfectant at least once a week. Food dishes and water bottles should also be cleaned weekly. Always rinse and dry well before adding fresh bedding and returning your animal to his cage. It's always a good idea to reuse some of the old nesting material as this will help your hamster feel comfy and safe in familiar surroundings.

Health

Separate Syrian hamsters according to their sex by 3 weeks of age to avoid health risks and unwanted babies. Dwarf hamsters can produce babies every 3 weeks if males and females are not kept apart.

Be alert and consult a vet 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 or bumps, bleeding from any opening.

Warning

Hamsters love to explore so keep a watchful eye on them if you let them roam around the room. Electric wires are very attractive to rodents and they may nibble them with disastrous consequences

Fluffy' nesting materials can cause fatal injuries to hamsters and should never be used!