

# HAMSTERS



**Scientific Name:** Cricetinae

**For Recommended Ages:** 14 & up, with adult supervision

**Pet lifespan:** Up to 4 years (depending on breed)

**Pet Size:** Approximately 4 -25cm long (depending on breed)

## Nutrition

**Staple diet:** Choose a fortified diet for hamsters.

**Fruits & vegetables:** One teaspoon of chopped carrots and dark green veggies like mustard greens, collard greens or kale may be given daily. Offer finely chopped pieces of apple twice a week. Take care not to overfeed these fresh foods. They have high moisture content and too much can cause an upset stomach.

**Oatmeal:** A pinch of plain, uncooked oatmeal added to your pet's food dish everyday helps provide the fiber needed in their diet.

**Treats sticks & chews:** These hard and crunchy treats keep your hamster's front teeth trimmed – always keep one in their habitat.

**Water:** Change and fill your hamster's water bottle with clean water every day.

*\*Remember that fresh food items require their own dish and should be removed from the habitat after four hours to avoid spoilage. Treats should be less than 10% of total food intake.*

## Housing & Bedding

**Housing:** Your hamster needs a well ventilated home, large enough for a food dish and water bottle, a hiding area (if one isn't built in) and an exercise wheel. There should be plenty of room for all cage accessories, and for them to move around freely.

**Bedding:** Hamsters love to hide and burrow, so lots of clean aspen or other appropriate bedding is a must. Line the home with 3 - 5cm of bedding, and change it weekly or more often if needed.

**Cage placement:** Place the habitat in a cool, low humidity area, out of direct sunlight.

## Supply list

Here's a list of the necessities you'll need to take home to help your new hamster stay healthy and happy.

Home

- Appropriate size and type of cage
- Aspen or other appropriate bedding
- Water bottle
- Food bowls
- Hiding house
- Exercise wheel
- Fortified hamster diet
- Appropriate fresh fruits and veggies
- Treat sticks and chews
- Mineral wheel
- Toys
- Exercise ball
- Extras
- Vitamin drops
- Nesting material
- Cage cleaner and disinfectant (Read and follow label instructions)

## Traits & Behavior

**Nocturnal:** Hamsters like to run and play at night and sleep during the day, so be prepared for them to be noisy and active after dark.

**Social:** Hamsters can be friendly and social. If raised together, they can live together peacefully (house same gender pairs only)

**Hoarders:** Hamsters have large cheek pouches to carry food, which they'll store in a special hiding place. Clean: Hamsters are a very clean animal; you'll notice they groom themselves a lot.

## Health

### Signs of a healthy hamster:

- Clean, bright eyes
- Soft fur
- Full, slightly-rounded body (but not too fat)
- Curious, active behavior
- Eats and drinks normally
- Well-formed droppings with no diarrhea

### Things to watch for:

- Overgrown front teeth
- Bare patches in the fur
- Lethargic behavior
- Weight loss; not eating or drinking normally
- Diarrhea or wetness around the tail area (called "wet tail")

## Things to remember

**Lifting & Handling:** Handle your hamster gently, scoop them up in both hands and hold them with cupped hands so they feel safe and secure.

**Easily Startled:** Be careful, if your hamster gets scared, they may bite.

**Special Needs:** Your hamster's front teeth never stop growing

**Exercise:** Hamsters have lots of energy and need to run on a wheel in their habitat, or in an exercise ball daily.

**Safety & Cleanliness:** Please remember that all pets may bite or scratch, and may transmit a disease to humans. Keep your pet's home clean and wash your hands before and after handling your pet or cleaning their home. Infants, young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and the infirm or elderly are at a greater risk of infections and should use caution when in contact with the pet or its habitat. Consult your doctor for more information.

**Tip:** Be cautious to keep your hamster away from houseplants. Most are poisonous and if the hamster nibbles on them, it could become severely sick.



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