

FOOD

People often think that hamsters are vegetarian, but they're actually **omnivores**. In the wild, hamsters have been known to hunt and eat insects. If your hamster was living in its natural environment it would be eating seeds and grasses, plus a few insects.

Scatter feeding encourages a hamster to find its food much like foraging in the wild. Instead of putting the food in a bowl just scatter the food around the cage, this gives them a fun foraging activity and simulates natural behaviour.



Hamsters can store food in their cheeks, then eat it later!

The PDSA recommends that a Syrian and Dwarf hamster both need to be fed **approximately 10g** of dry food twice a day.

It can be a good idea to give your hamster filtered water to drink if you live in an area where the tap water contains a lot of chlorine or other chemicals. This water can be provided in a bottle or a bowl, but make sure the bowl doesn't get filled with bedding.

TREATS

Once a week you can consider giving your hamster an edible treat by providing some **meal worms**, or a small amount of boiled egg. These are favourites with most hamsters, and they are also rich in protein so they make an excellent addition to your pet's diet.

Your hamster will love to eat **fruit & vegetables**, but be careful not to give them too much. A small cube of fruit or vegetable, **2-3 times a week**, is more than enough.

Other fruits and vegetables that your hamster will like include cauliflower, broccoli, pear, peach and banana.



Remember to remove any uneaten fresh food from your hamster's cage so that it doesn't rot.

HEALTH

As they are prey animals Hamsters are very good at hiding any health conditions they are developing. It is important to pay close attention to any changes in their behaviour and take them to an **exotic vet** if you notice any changes, such as: rapid change in weight, limping or falling over, laboured breathing, lumps or bumps, inactivity, lack of appetite or increase in drinking.



Sources:
RSPCA, PDSA, The Little Pet Company (Scotland) Ltd, hamsterwelfare.com, thepipsqueakery.org

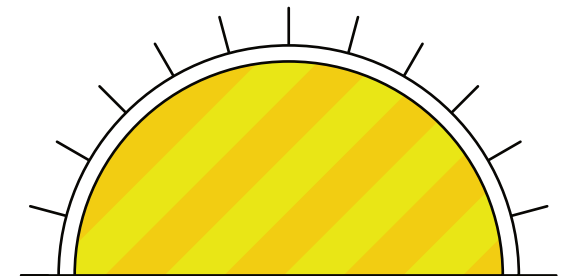


HAMSTER CARE GUIDE

Hamsters are small rodents, with an average lifespan of 2-2.5 years and can grow between 3 to 5.5 inches depending on the breed.

Hamsters are "**crepuscular**". This means that hamsters are not diurnal or nocturnal, but rather they are most active during the twilight hours.

Hamsters are solitary creatures that live alone in the wild and will fight if housed with others. They will often need to be tamed before they tolerate or enjoy human interaction.



HOUSING

Although they no longer advocate a minimum size, the RSPCA used to state a minimum hamster cage size of **75cm x 40cm x 40cm** for dwarf hamsters and larger for Syrians.

Hamsters are **burrowing animals** and need deep bedding to make their burrows. At least **3-6 inches of dust free bedding** provides adequate room to make tunnels and chambers.

Hamsters use **hides** so they have a variety of locations to sleep, pee and store food. One hide is a minimum, but more is advised. These give your Hamster a ready made place to sleep during the day, store food and go to the toilet.

Your hamster itself does not need cleaning as they groom themselves.

Hamsters have an oil based coat, and they use **sand** to clean themselves as they are desert animals. Children's play sand or calcium free reptile sand is also appropriate. They should have a small flat tray with this on.

Paper, Aspen or Hemp are suitable materials. Pine and Cedar wood shavings are not suitable as they can cause splinters. Avoid fluffy and artificial fibres as these can get tangled around the Hamsters legs or cause issues if eaten

When **cleaning their enclosure** make sure the products clearly state "Pet safe". Remove soiled bedding regularly, and a third of the bedding every few weeks. A bigger enclosure means a complete enclosure clean is required less often. Leave a bit of their old bedding after each full clean so there is a familiar scent.

A solid **Wheel or Flying Saucer**, that is large enough for the hamsters back to not bend or curve. This means a recommended diameter size of 12 inches for Syrian hamsters and 8 inches for Dwarfs.

Mesh or wire wheels can cause health issues for their feet, or cause their legs to get trapped.

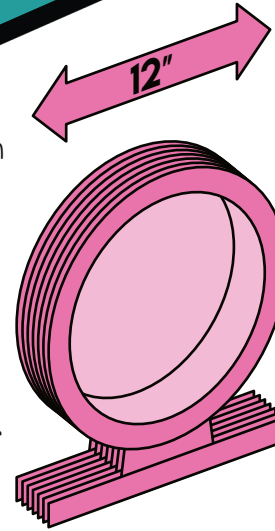
Hamsters have one of the biggest roaming areas of any rodent. Having empty space in their enclosure helps with their comparatively poor upward mobility compared to other small rodents.

Some breeds of Hamsters run up to 100 miles in the wild each night!

Hamsters heavily rely on scent to navigate their environment, and **Hamster balls are very difficult for them to see through and breath out of**. A free roaming pen is a much safer way to allow them to explore the world outside their enclosure, and can be filled with toys, hides and treats.

Hamsters teeth constantly grow, without **chew toys** its teeth can grow so long that it would struggle to open its mouth to eat properly.

Hamsters rely on their sense of smell and hearing much more than sight, and are very sensitive to strange noises and smells. Keep their enclosure away from household appliances that generate ultrasound such as screens, and sources of strong smells like air fresheners.



Foraging toys provide a natural activity for the hamster which reduces stress, promotes resourcefulness, helps to increase life expectancy and is really cute to watch. Suitable toys can be bought from pet shops in the small animal or bird sections or made at home.

DIY Hamster Toys

