



Hamster Husbandry Sheet

Hamsters make great pets and come in a variety of colors and coat types. Hamsters are generally nocturnal and live about 2 years. They love exploring and will attempt to escape whenever possible. It is important to ensure that cages are closed tightly. Hamsters tend to startle very easily so it is best if you gently nudge them or rattle the cage before handling. Make sure that they are awake and alert before trying to handle them. Picking them up by scooping underneath them is probably the best way to remove them from the cage.

Housing

Hamsters need a cage with a flat bottom. Wire-bottom cages can cause a variety of foot issues. The cage should be 12x20x10in (10 gallons) as a minimum. However, a bigger cage is always better. Any wire cages should have horizontal bars that are spaced close enough so your rodent cannot squeeze through them. A 10-20 gallon or larger aquariums with a tank topper are also appropriate housing for hamsters if they are kept very clean. We recommend using Carefresh® bedding, paper towel or newspaper for bedding. Do not use cedar chips for bedding because they are potentially toxic to your pet.

You should provide a hiding spot for your hamster so they can have some privacy and a sense of safety. Rodents have teeth that continuously grow throughout their life, they will chew on nearly everything in order to keep their teeth worn down to an appropriate length. Because of this, any hides should be chew proof, or edible so nothing harmful is accidentally consumed. You should also provide lots of toys for your rodent to chew. There is a variety of commercially available wooden chew toys available, but they also enjoy chewing on cardboard. Changing toys and hiding places around every 3-7 days will help to mentally stimulate your rodent.

Hamsters like to be housed by themselves as they are very territorial towards other hamsters.

Feeding

There is a variety of commercially available pelleted diets for hamsters. These diets, such as the brand Oxbow, tend to be nutritionally balanced and provide all the necessary nutrients for your rodents. Seed diets should be avoided due to high fat content and not providing as balanced nutrition. Most hamsters will only eat parts of the diet, making it an unbalanced option. Be sure to use a chew proof feeding dish, such as ceramic, for everything given to your pet. You can give fruits and vegetables as treats. Some examples that are good to give to your rodent would be: apples, pears, bananas, melon, broccoli, carrots, and celery. Be sure to remove seeds/skins

before giving them to your rodent and remove any fresh food items they do not eat so they do not spoil in the cage. Fresh water should be given daily. Water bottles that attach to the cage and have chew proof mouth pieces tend to work best.

Cleaning

The cleaner your cage is, the healthier your rodent will be. The bedding should be spot cleaned regularly and fully replaced approximately every week. The cage should be thoroughly cleaned with a commercial cage cleaner or dilute bleach solution. Be sure to rinse the cage fully and allow the cage to completely dry before replacing bedding and furniture. All wooden toys should be discarded after a while because they cannot fully be cleaned. Water bottles and food dishes should be cleaned and disinfected weekly with the cage as well. Some of these accessories can also be placed in the dishwasher for easy cleaning.

Enrichment

Even though we do our best as pet owners to provide the best care possible, sometimes that is just not enough. Some pets need additional stimuli/enrichment in addition to the right food, water and housing. Below are some options to increase the value of your pet's day-to-day lives:

- Hide outs/tunnels: Hamsters naturally desire to hide and enjoy hide boxes and tunnels.
 - PVC piping can be used to create tunnels and cardboard boxes provide nice hiding opportunities.
 - Some commercially available hay-based igloos or houses can provide an edible house.
- Nesting: Most hamsters like to create an extra cozy sleep spot. Some extra nesting material can be helpful for this.
- Chewing: Hamsters will chew on anything and everything! Make sure to provide a variety of wooden or hay-based things for your pet to chew on.
- Wheel: Hamsters can be very active creatures; a wheel provides that ability to burn off the extra energy.
- Foraging: Hiding high value treats (such as fruit) in something to make your pet work a little for their food is beneficial.
- Destruction: Anything that your pet can rip apart such as crumpled up paper ball, toilet paper tubes, or newspaper is simple and fun!

Just make sure if making anything at home to avoid sticky tape, sharp edges, and chemicals. Be careful about disease transfer using anything from outside or another animal. Keep in mind that your pet can and will eat things they are not supposed to – monitor closely.