

Hamster



Various species

While "hamster" is a broad term for many species of rodent, most of what you'll find available in the pet trade come from only a handful species native to locales across Asia. Hamsters range in size from the dwarf Roborovski at 3 inches to the large Syrian (also known as "fancy" or "teddy bear") at 7 inches. They come in a variety of colors and coat types and have a lifespan from 1 1/2 years to 3 1/2 years depending on species.

Housing

Size

Several cage types are available for hamsters, including wire cages, aquariums, and tube cages. The size of the cage depends on the needs of your hamster(s). A cage that is 10" x 20" x 12" would be appropriate for a single large hamster or a pair of dwarf hamsters. Exercise caution when keeping two or more hamsters together as fights can break out, especially between two males. Do not keep hamsters of different species together.

Bedding

Hamsters are burrowing creatures and will be much happier with an appropriate bedding type and depth lining the bottom of their cage. Types ranging from wood shavings to recycled newspaper are all good choices, but cedar must be avoided as its aromatic oils can cause respiratory problems. A depth of 1 to 2 inches should be sufficient. Your tank should also include an enclosed sleeping area which you can fill with a softer, fluffier material designed to line sleeping areas.

Decor

Objects to keep your hamster occupied and entertained are a must. Many options are available, but some key items that every cage should have include a wheel, some type of chew block or chew toy, and pipes or tubes. Hamsters are nocturnal, so you can expect it to utilize its toys most often at night. By sticking to a routine you can alter your hamster's schedule to match your own.



Some products to look for

- Oxbow Essentials Hamster & Gerbil Food
- Crittertrail One Level Habitat
- Carefresh Premium Soft Pet Bedding
- A & E Java Wood Toy
- Vitakraft Yogurt Drops
- Kaytee Chew Proof Water Bottle
- Best Buy Pet Bowl
- Critter Ware Flying Saucer
- 8 in 1 Ecotriton Snak Shak



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Water

Hamsters will dirty a water bowl quickly, leaving the water within undrinkable. The best option for providing consistent fresh water for your hamster is to have the correct size water bottle attached to the cage. Chew-proof glass options are available in the event your hamster decides its plastic water bottle makes a good chew toy.

Diet

Seeds & Pellets

Two main types of hamster diets are available: pellets and mixed seeds and grains. Pellets are a good way to ensure your hamster is getting a balanced diet because it isn't able to pick and choose what parts of the food to eat. Conversely, if your hamster is the type to eat whatever is offered, mixed seed and grain diets offer a variety your hamster may appreciate. Whatever your food choice, it is recommended to use a dietary vitamin and mineral supplement to make certain your hamster is getting complete nutrition.

Fresh Food

Fresh foods are an excellent supplemental nutrition option. There are many fruit (bananas, cranberries, grapes, etc.) and vegetable (asparagus, broccoli, peas, etc.) options that are safe for your hamster. Alfalfa hay is another welcome addition to your hamster's diet. Fresh foods should only make up a small portion of your hamster's food intake, so use them sparingly. Some fruits and veggies should be avoided, like onions, potatoes, and raw rhubarb as they can be toxic. Uneaten portions of fresh food items should be removed after 24 hours.

Treats

There are a variety of treats available, but they should only make up a small percentage of your hamster's overall food intake. Some varieties available are yogurt drops, baked pretzels designed for hamsters, and treat bars. Your hamster may stash these treats in its cheeks for later consumption so don't be alarmed if the treats disappear quickly.



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