

= Djungarian hamster =

The Djungarian hamster (*Phodopus sungorus*), also known as the Siberian hamster , Siberian dwarf hamster or Russian winter white dwarf hamster , is one of three species of hamster in the genus *Phodopus* . It is ball @-@ shaped and typically half the size of the Syrian hamster , and therefore called a dwarf hamster along with all *Phodopus* species . Features of the Djungarian hamster include a typically thick , dark grey dorsal stripe and furry feet . As winter approaches and the days shorten , the Djungarian hamster 's dark fur is almost entirely replaced with white fur . In captivity , this does not always happen . In the wild , they originate from Dzungaria , the wheat fields of Kazakhstan , the meadows of Mongolia , Siberia , and the birch stands of Manchuria .

Djungarian hamsters are common as pets in Europe and North America , and exhibit greater variance in their coats than those found in the wild . They reproduce often ? more so than Syrian hamsters ? and , as they have no fixed breeding season , can continue to produce large amounts of offspring all year round . Young pups will act aggressively to one another ; whilst breeding females may show similar aggression to males .

= = Physical description = =

The coat of the Djungarian hamster is less woolly than that of the Campbell 's dwarf hamster , and apart from the normal colouring , they can be coloured sapphire , sapphire pearl , or normal pearl . The head length of the Djungarian hamster is 70 to 90 millimetres in length , the length of the tail is five to 15 millimetres , and the hind legs are 11 to 15 millimetres . The body weight changes dramatically throughout the year . It is at its lowest during the winter months . In males , the body weight ranges from 19 grams (0 @. @ 67 oz) to 45 grams (1 @. @ 6 oz) , and in females , 19 grams (0 @. @ 67 oz) to 36 grams (1 @. @ 3 oz) . In human care , they are slightly heavier . The average lifespan of the Djungarian hamster is one to three years of age in captivity , though they can live longer . In the wild , they are known to live as little as one year .

In summer , the fur of the Djungarian hamster on the back changes from ash @-@ grey to dark brown , or sometimes pale brown with a tint . The face changes to grey or brown , while the mouth area , the whisker area and the ears are slightly brighter . The outer ears and the eyes have black edges . The rest of the head is dark brown or black . From the head to the tail runs a black @-@ brown dorsal stripe . The throat , belly , tail and limbs are white . The ears are grey with a pinkish tint with scattered black hairs . The hairs on the underside are completely white . The bright coat the bottom extends to the shoulders , flanks and hips in three arches upward . It is distinguished from the darker fur on the top of the existing black @-@ brown hair , three curved line .

Apart from the typical colouration , Djungarian hamsters can also be coloured pearl , sapphire , sapphire pearl and marbled . Other colorations are available , but these are strongly suspected to appear only in hybrid crossings with Campbell Dwarf hamsters . Some of these colorations are mandarin , blue , argente , yellow blue fawn , camel , brown , cream , merle and umbrous .

In the winter , the fur is more dense . They sometimes have a grey tint on their head . More than ten percent of the hamsters kept in the first winter develop the summer coat . In the second winter , only a few change into the winter coat and winter colour is less pronounced . The moulting in the winter fur starts in October or November and is completed in December , while the summer coat begins in January or February and is completed in March or early April . The ears are grey with a pinkish tint . Moulting both run jobs on the head and the back of the spine to the sides , the legs and the underside . The hairs grow longer in the summer , to about ten millimetres long .

The pigmentation of hair is controlled by the hormone prolactin and colour genetics . Day length must be less than fourteen hours to initiate the change to winter coat . The change to the winter coat can be triggered in the summer by the short day lengths . The change occurs back to the summer coat in the autumn , when the length of the days change again . At internal temperatures hamsters in captivity start later with the changes . The winter colour is less pronounced in them . The eyes of the Djungarian hamster are black , unless it is albino in which case they are red .

= = In the wild = =

In the wild , the Djungarian hamster 's fur changes colour in the winter . This adaptation helps them to evade predators in the snow @-@ covered steppes of winter . The Djungarian hamster digs tunnels one metre deep leading to ground burrows where they can sleep , raise their young and hide from predators . The weasel is one of the Djungarian hamsters main predators . Most of these burrows have six entrances . In the summer time , the burrows are lined with moss . To keep the burrow warm in the winter , the Djungarian hamster closes all but one entrance and lines the burrows with animal fur or wool that it finds . The temperature inside the burrow is usually 16 @. @ 7 ° C (62 @. @ 1 ° F) . Djungarian hamsters sometimes live in the semi @-@ deserts in Central Asia . They also live in the dry steppes and wheat or alfalfa fields as well as on small fields in the forests of the region around Minusinsk . The fur on the Djungarian hamster 's feet protect the feet from the cold ground from in the cold climates in the wild . The population density is highly varied . In 1968 , the first four examples of the Djungarian hamster were caught in Western Siberia and brought to the Max Planck Institute in Germany .

= = = Systematics = = =

The Djungarian hamster is a species of *Phodopus* . The Campbell 's Dwarf Hamster is named as a separate species within the *Phodopus sungorus* species with respect to subspecies . Other subspecies are not distinguished . The Djungarian hamster was described by Peter Simon Pallas in 1773 as a mouse . The species name *sungorus* derives from the *Dsungaria* . In 1778 , Pallas renamed the Djungarian hamster to mouse *songarus* . Ned Hollister ordered the Djungarian hamster in 1912 to the genus *Phodopus* . A. I. Argiropulo , in 1933 , changed the name to priority *sungorus* and united the Djungarian hamster as a subspecies of *Phodopus sungorus sungorus* with the Campbell 's Dwarf Hamster .

= = Pet ownership = =

Djungarian hamsters are often found on the pet market in Europe and North America . Care of the Djungarian hamster is similar to all other species of *Phodopus* . Djungarian hamsters , along with most rodents , are prone to tumours . They can also receive injury in the cheek pouch by sharp objects damaging the fragile inner lining . Other health problems include bite wounds , broken teeth , constipation , dehydration , dental malocclusion , diarrhea and ear problems . The Djungarian hamster is easy to tame . In addition to natural colourings in the wild , (" ruddy " or " agouti ") Djungarian hamsters in captivity come in a variety of different colors .

= = Breeding = =

Djungarian hamsters reproduce at a faster rate than Syrian hamsters . *Phodopus* are able to become pregnant again on the same day that they have given birth . This can all happen within a thirty @-@ six @-@ day period . This is done as a survival strategy to produce large numbers of offspring in a short period of time . This places tremendous demands on the mother . Research suggests biparental care in Campbell 's hamsters (*Phodopus campbelli*) but not in Djungarian hamsters (*Phodopus sungorus*) . Frequent fighting can occur between the pups and as soon as they are weaned from their mother , they are separated from their mother . They should not be separated from their mother before three weeks of age . Most Djungarian hamster dwarf hamsters grow to 3 to 4 " long . Djungarian hamsters breed all year round as there is no specific breeding season .

During the breeding time , the Djungarian hamster may become aggressive . After mating , the female may want to attack the male to protect her babies . The male will usually hide in holes or caves to escape from the vicious bite of the female Djungarian hamster . The Djungarian hamster 's estrous cycle lasts four days , this means every four days , the female may accept the male back to

breed again . This usually occurs when the darkness of the evening sets in . If a male and female Djungarian hamster are not housed together from a young age , it is difficult to tell if the female is willing to breed with the male .

= = = Hybrids = = =

Of the five species kept commonly as pets , only the Campbell 's dwarf hamster and Djungarian hamsters are able to interbreed and produce live offspring or hybrids . Although hybrids make suitable pets , the breeding of hybrids and cloning can cause health and reproduction problems . In addition , the widespread breeding and distribution of hybrids could threaten the existence of both pure species and subspecies of the ecosystem , resulting in only mongrels . Hybridizing causes each litter to become smaller and the young begin to form congenital problems .