



GUIDE TO CARING FOR YOUR HAMSTER

Needing very little space, hamsters make good family pets and with time and attention will soon become very tame. They spend most of the day asleep, becoming active in the evening and at night. Syrian hamsters are the most common species but there are also three varieties of dwarf hamster. Young children should be supervised when handling a hamster, particularly a dwarf variety. Hamsters can live from two to four years given the correct care and attention.

HOUSING YOUR HAMSTER

Your hamster needs to be kept indoors at room temperature. They are best kept in plastic cages with metal tops (they will gnaw wooden ones) positioned out of direct sunlight and away from draughts or radiators which could cause rapid changes in temperature. Dwarf hamsters are better kept in a glass or plastic aquarium with ventilated lids, as the bars in a wire cage are often too far apart, allowing them to escape. System cages are very popular as hamsters like to play in

tubes and climb, but dwarf hamsters may require mouse ladders in the vertical tubes.

Hamsters are very active so choose the largest possible home for your pet. The floor of the cage should be covered with wood shavings, shredded paper or synthetic bedding, but do not use hay. A nesting box should be situated in the cage as a refuge and a safe place to sleep.

The cage should be cleaned once a week with disinfectant. Clean toilet areas more often as it is important that the cage environment is kept clean and hygienic.

Provided they have enough space, dwarf hamsters can be kept in single sex groups. Start with two or more, as new individuals may not be accepted later. Hamsters do occasionally fight so separate them immediately if their normal play becomes aggressive. Syrian hamsters are best kept on their own so make sure they are given lots of attention and an interesting environment in which to live. If given a wheel or a ball to play in they can cover up to six miles a day.

Hamsters live an average of 2 to 3 years, they are available from your pet shop from 10 to 12 weeks old. By three months they are fully grown.

HANDLING AND CARE OF YOUR HAMSTER

Introduce your hamster to his new home as quickly as possible and leave him to get used to the new surroundings with minimal interference for a day or two. Talk quietly to your hamster; introduce your hand into the cage and offer a treat. Eventually he will climb onto your hand.

To handle your hamster, cup one hand under and one over him and gently lift him from the cage. Regular handling will develop confidence. To reduce the risk of a serious fall, handle your hamster close to the floor or over a table. Never let your hamster out of his cage unsupervised. Don't wake a hamster quickly and then pick him up; this can be very frightening for a small animal and may cause it to bite.

Hamsters, like all rodents, like to chew. Wooden toys and gnawing treats are essential to keep their ever-growing teeth filed. Hamsters are prone to severe diarrhoea known as 'wet tail'. This can be caused by inappropriate foods or stress from handling. Avoid handling your hamster if you are suffering from a cold, as you may infect them. Consult your vet immediately if your hamster is unwell.

FEEDING YOUR HAMSTER

Introduce your hamster to a new food over a couple of days. My Pet Foods' My Healthy Hamster is a complete feed mixture incorporating a blend of wholesome natural ingredients with a perfect



balance of nutrients suitable for all hamsters. The mix is formulated to provide a balanced diet for long-term health and vitality, when fed alongside a supply of fresh water. My Healthy Hamster includes added peanuts and banana chips, which are great favourites with your hamster.

Hamsters will also eat vegetables, greens and fresh fruit but these should only be given in small amounts by hand or they will be hoarded away where they will rot. The feed bowl, which should be earthenware to prevent chewing, will always be cleared as hamsters hoard food in cheek pouches and within the cage area, so be careful not to overfeed. To avoid stomach upsets do not feed food that has been frosted or frozen. Timothy hay and alfalfa can also be fed in small amounts but if too much is given it will be used as bedding. Water should be available from a stainless steel drinking tube that must be cleaned every day and kept filled.

GOOD NUTRITION AND HOUSING ARE THE KEY TO A HEALTHY HAMSTER MY PET FOODS WILL HELP PROVIDE THE BEST NUTRITIONAL CARE FOR YOUR HAMSTER

If you have any questions on feeding your hamster contact our customer care services on:

01227 723816

email: info@mypetfoods.com

website: www.mypetfoods.com

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