

Pet Care of a Hamster



Hamsters are a member of the rodent family, along with rats, mice, gerbils and chinchillas.

What do we know about these little mammals?

| Diet | Environment |
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| <p>Hamsters need pelleted foods, or a mix of different seeds and nuts.</p> <p>Food must be changed regularly, as if it becomes stale or mouldy, hamsters can get very ill.</p> <p>They must always have fresh, clean water, which they can reach from a bottle attached to their cage.</p> <p>Hamsters hoard food as a survival technique. They can store food in their cheek pouches, up to half their body weight!</p> | <p>In the wild, hamsters live in dry, rocky plains and nest underground in burrows.</p> <p>As they like to dig, their cages need to be large, with the bottom filled with litter materials, like dust-free wood shavings are a good choice. These shavings mean hamsters can still dig.</p> <p>Hamsters are nocturnal, so they need to be able to exercise at night and sleep, without disturbances, during the day.</p> |

Hamsters typically live for 2 years. They are quite a responsibility and need to be cared for appropriately.

Did you know ...?



Hamsters can be trained to do simple tricks!

Smell is a useful sense which hamsters use for social communication.

Their incisor teeth never stop growing! They self-sharpen when a hamster is gnawing food or objects.

Hamster behaviour

Hamsters like to explore, so they need cardboard tubes, a wooden chew block, small boxes and a hamster wheel, to keep them busy and healthy. Their whiskers help them explore the world, and they use them to detect objects.

They are prey animals so have very well developed senses to warn them of predators, and are nervous and easily afraid.

Dangers to hamsters

Hamsters need to be kept safe. Keep these tips in mind:

- Grapes and rhubarb are poisonous to hamsters.
- They can catch a human cold, and infect people with the cold virus.
- They need to be away from objects which transmit ultrasound, like TVs, computers and vacuums.
- If you let them out of their cage, make sure no other pets are around, and that the hamster is supervised until it is returned to the cage. They can chew wires and other materials which can make them very ill and affect their breathing.



Questions

1. Name two other members of the family which hamsters are part of.

2. Explain why food needs changing regularly.

3. Why do hamsters need a certain type of bedding or cage material?

4. Would a hamster be a good pet for someone who is at home all day and wants company?
Explain your thoughts.

5. Which of the 'Did you know...?' facts do you find most interesting, and why?

6. Identify three items an owner could put in the hamster cage to keep them busy.

7. What would happen if a hamster had their whiskers trimmed?

8. What does "they are prey animals" mean?

Questions

9. Why do hamsters who are out of their cage, need to be 'supervised' until they are back in their cage? Give an example of what could happen.

10. Would you want a hamster? Explain your thoughts.
