

Caring for your dwarf hamster

How to keep pet dwarf hamsters healthy and happy



Caring for your dwarf hamster



Are dwarf hamsters right for me?

These little hamsters are only half the size of Syrian hamsters and make lively, attractive little pets. Dwarf hamsters are ideal first time pets too and if looked after properly, can live up to 5 years.

These hamsters are fast, but easy to handle which make them a good pet for children, provided they are always supervised. With time, your hamster will get used to you and enjoy being out of his cage.

Hamsters are nocturnal, so they like to sleep during the day and exercise at night.

Choosing a new pet hamster

When selecting your hamster, check these signs that he is healthy:

- Alert and interested in his surroundings
- Clean, dry nose
- Clear eyes
- Clean, healthy fur
- Teeth are a good length
- Healthy appetite
- Breathes clearly
- Clean bottom

The first few days

Hamsters are very short sighted and get frightened very easily. When you first take your new hamster home it is best to put him in his new cage in a quiet room and leave him to settle in. This may take a couple of days.

Once they have explored their new home, you can open the cage and rub your hands in the bedding – this will take any unfamiliar smell off your hands. Then place both hands under your hamster and cup him up inside.

To start with, don't try to pick up your hamster by putting your hand through the door of his cage. Keep hands low over the base of the cage so if he jumps out of your hands he won't get hurt. If this happens, wait a short while before picking him up again. You may need to do this for up to two weeks.

We recommend that you don't put your hamster in an exercise ball until you are confident holding him.

Creating a happy home

Many hamster cages are designed for larger Syrian hamsters and would therefore be too big for a small Russian or Chinese hamster. Dwarf hamsters can easily squeeze through the bars or wouldn't be able to climb up some of the vertical tubes featured in those cages. To access higher levels, dwarf hamsters would need the help of a ladder or a smaller tube designed for their size and capabilities. Ensure your cage is specifically designed for dwarf hamsters.

Caring for your dwarf hamster

Cover the bottom floor with a 5 to 8 cm layer of woodchip to allow the hamster to burrow and give them a cosy sleeping area with a hamster house or nest box filled with bedding.

A constant temperature is needed for your hamster's home so the cage should be kept in a warm room at average room temperature. Window sills should be avoided as they can become very hot in the afternoon and cold at night.

Hamster cages should be cleaned at least once per week with a spray suitable for small animals and dried with a tissue or clean cloth. Put some of the old paper bedding back in their cage to make it feel familiar.

A healthy diet and treats

Hamsters are omnivores and enjoy a small amount of animal protein. Clean, fresh water should be available at all times.

The best time to feed them is early evening which is when they start to wake.

A healthy, varied diet would be:

- Basic hamster mix of flaked maize, crushed oats, corn, grain, sunflower seeds and peanuts or a pelleted food (which prevents selective feeding).
- A small amount of fresh clean fruit or vegetables e.g. apple, cabbage, carrot, beansprouts, pear, or parsley.
- Hard foods to wear down the teeth, e.g. cabbage stalk or dog biscuit. A wooden chew will also help keep their teeth healthy.

- A mineral lickstone provides essential salts and minerals and should be available at all times.

Treat them now and then with protein in the form of hard-boiled egg, cheese, chopped meat or wholemeal bread.

Getting to know you

Hamsters are extremely short-sighted so in order not to scare him, make sure that he is aware of your presence before trying to pick him up.

Begin by stroking your hamster and then cup your hands around him to prevent him slipping out of your grip.

Hamsters are prey animals and if you reach over to pick him up from above he may react by giving you a nip.

Dwarf hamsters should be handled regularly, ideally daily, to avoid them reverting to an untamed state.

Exercise your hamster needs

Dwarf hamsters are extremely active little creatures and it is therefore important to provide them with as large and interesting a home environment as possible.

A large cage with ramps, ladders, galleries, tubes, a wheel and toys gives plenty of opportunity for exercise. A small apple branch can be put in their cage for them to climb on which will help keep their nails in trim.

A special mini hamster play ball will allow them free exercise around the house, but only put one hamster in the ball at a time. They can be exercising in their ball for up to 20 minutes and should be fully supervised during that time.

Dwarf hamsters and other pets

Chinese and Russian dwarf hamsters can sometimes be kept in pairs or small groups of a single sex, however some individuals are best kept alone as compatibility cannot always be guaranteed.

If you are unsure, please ask our pet centre team whether they think your chosen hamster will be happier by themselves or with company.

Hamster gender

Please ask a member of our team to confirm the sex of your hamster before buying.



Potential health issues with hamsters

Wet Tail

The main symptom of this disease is watery diarrhoea causing continual wetness of the fur under the tail. Hamsters suffering from this will show listlessness and loss of appetite. Prompt veterinary advice must be sought in cases of Wet Tail.

Respiratory disorders

Hamsters can catch colds and suffer from sneezing, sore nose and eyes. Ensure the cage is not damp or in a draught. If the problem persists, seek veterinary advice.

Overgrown teeth

Their long incisor teeth at the front of their jaw grow continuously and need to be worn down. The easiest way to deal with this is to keep a gnawing block in your hamster's cage.

Unshelled brazil nuts also help because hamsters are particularly fond of them.

If their teeth do become overgrown, they will need to see a vet.

Caring for your dwarf hamster



Pet insurance for your hamster

Hamsters can be insured under plans for small mammals, however, it may not be possible to find an insurance plan specifically tailored to hamsters.

Your new pet checklist

- Cage or aquarium
- Woodchips
- Bedding material
- Food bowl
- Water bottle
- Hamster food
- Wood gnaws
- Cage disinfectant
- Vitamins
- Exercise ball for dwarf hamsters
- Wheel
- Mineral lickstone
- Treats



Help and further advice

If you have any questions about caring for your pet, our fully trained team are happy to help if they can, or advise on where to find more specialist information.

Whilst there is a wealth of information available online, only a professional will be able to correctly answer your query. If in doubt, call your local vet for an appointment.

It is against the law to release, or allow to escape, non-native animals or birds. If you have trouble caring for any animals contact our team for advice.



Share your experiences of your new pet with us on social media.



@Notcuttsuk