

# Hamster Care Guide

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*Caring for all of your pets*

Hamsters are small nocturnal rodents. They love to hoard food in their cheeks and also love to chew! They are pretty good at escaping so make sure you have a very secure cage. There are many different species of hamsters with Syrian hamsters, also known as golden or teddy bear hamsters, being the most common ones kept as pets.



## HOUSING

### Cage:

- Provide the largest cage possible to allow your hamster ample space to move around
- Wire cages with plastic bottoms are ideal for hamsters as they provide good ventilation.
- Provide hiding boxes in the cage such as paper towel rolls and cardboard boxes with bedding or hay in the bottom for your hamster to nest in.

### Bedding:

- Always use unscented bedding and avoid cedar and pine shavings – strongly smelling bedding can cause irritation to the nose and lungs and contribute to respiratory disease.
- CareFresh or recycled newspaper beddings (e.g.g Yesterday's News) are recommended as they are good absorbable unscented materials.
- Ensure to clean the bedding regularly – spot clean the bedding daily and change all the bedding 2-3 times a week.

## NUTRITION

- Always have fresh water available via a drinking bottle or bowl

### Pellets

- Commercial hamster diets such as Oxbow Essentials Hamster and Gerbil Food should make up the majority of the diet.
- Avoid pellets that are sold as “mixes” containing seeds, fruits or nuts – your hamster may pick out their favorite food and often not obtain the balanced diet they need. They can also be too high in fats leading to excessive weight gain

### Hay

- Grass hay such as timothy, orchard, oat or botanical hay can always be available to your hamster.
- Timothy hay tunnels can also provide great enrichment and enjoyment to your hamster

### Treats

- Should be given sparingly to your hamster
- Oxbow Animal Health have a variety of healthy treats that can be given
- Small amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables can be used as treats
- Be consistent with treats and introduce new ones slowly to prevent stomach upset

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## BEHAVIOR

- Most hamsters need to be housed alone as they tend to fight when together.
- If housed in pairs they will need to be paired before puberty to try to prevent fighting. Alternatively, males can be neutered to prevent aggression and unwanted breeding.
- Ensure to provide a running wheel with a solid floor
- Hamsters love to chew so be sure to provide them with plenty of objects to chew on such as hay, paper towel rolls and cardboard boxes.

## HEALTH CARE

- Hamsters by nature hide symptoms and signs of illnesses making early detection of disease difficult
- New patient exams and yearly examinations are therefore strongly recommended to help your hamster live a long and happy life.
- If you notice any changes to your hamster's behavior, appetite or bowel movements we would recommend contacting your veterinarian immediately