

Hamsters



All hamsters need...

FOOD AND WATER

- ✓ Hamsters need fresh, clean drinking water at all times from a bottle suitable for hamsters.
- ✓ Feed good quality hamster pellets or a mixture of different seeds. You can also feed small amounts of safe fruit and vegetables as part of the daily ration, but not grapes or rhubarb as these are poisonous to rodents.

A GOOD HOME

- ✓ Give your hamsters a comfortable, clean and quiet place to live, which is dry and free from draughts. They need a place to hide too – a dark nesting box is ideal.
- ✓ A cage with stainless steel bars or mesh sides is better than one with solid sides with a raised lid.
- ✓ Hamsters are nocturnal so keep their cage in a room where the lights go off at roughly the same time each night.
- ✓ Keep the cage away from TVs, computers, vacuum cleaners and running water – hamsters are very sensitive to the sounds they make.
- ✓ Give your hamsters dust-free woodchips or shredded filter paper for bedding, deep enough to dig in (check the wood used is safe for your hamsters). Also give good quality hay or shredded paper for nesting. Never use sawdust, strong-scented or fluffy nesting material or anything really absorbent.

TO BE HEALTHY

- ✓ Hamsters need to be checked for signs of injury or illness every day. See a vet straight away if you spot anything unusual.
- ✓ Never startle or frighten your hamsters as this could really upset them.

COMPANY

- ✓ Before you get a hamster find out whether they prefer to live in groups or alone. Syrian hamsters, for example, are solitary. A group of hamsters should ideally be litter mates.
- ✓ If in a group, your hamsters should have enough extra toys and hiding places so they don't have to share. Check daily to make sure they are getting on.
- ✓ Handle your hamsters gently as it can be stressful for them. Don't disturb them if they're sleeping.
- ✓ Your hamsters should be properly cared for by a responsible person when you are away.

TO BEHAVE NORMALLY

- ✓ Running wheels can be good for exercise but also give your hamsters tubes and shelves in the cage for climbing and exploring. Wheels must have a solid floor – check your hamster's feet to make sure they aren't getting sore if they like to use it. Cage dividers make their space more interesting too. Hamster balls are not recommended.
- ✓ During the winter your hamsters might hibernate. Don't disturb them, unless you think they are poorly, but check them regularly.
- ✓ Let your hamsters explore outside their cage as often as you can. Watch closely and make sure they are safe.
- ✓ Never trim your hamsters' whiskers.

