

PISCES

PET EMPORIUM



Photo by Pisces Pet Emporium

Hamster

Mesocricetus auratus

Lifespan: 1 to 3 years.

Size: Mature Hamsters will range from 17cm to 18cm and weigh about 4 to 6 ounces.

Maturity/Breeding: Hamsters can become sexually mature when they are 35 days old. After they reach sexual maturity, they become cannibalistic, so separating them before this time is mandatory unless you want them to breed. Hamsters should be housed separately, as they are very territorial and if kept in pairs they will usually fight, which may be fatal.

Enclosure: Hamsters do best in a wire cage with crossbars and a plastic bottom. The cage should measure 16" x 12" x 10" (40cm x 30cm x 25cm). Make sure the door fastens tightly so your hamster can't escape. Wood shavings or other soft, absorbent bedding should be used. Avoid using cedar shavings because the vapors are harmful to its eyes and skin. Your hamster will also require a house to sleep in. Hamsters are nocturnal, so the house should be dark enough to not disrupt their sleeping patterns. Make sure you fully clean the cage at least once a week to prevent illness.

Heating: Hamsters can be sensitive to temperature changes. Maintain an ambient temperature of 18 °C to 26 °C (64 °F to 79 °F). Sudden drops in temperatures may cause your hamster to enter a state of hibernation, which will usually lead to death.

Feeding: Hamsters are nocturnal, so feeding should be done at nighttime. Pisces recommends feeding a dry food designed for hamsters. They should also have extruded hamster blocks as well as fruits and veggies. You can offer treats such as timothy hay, unseasoned cooked beef, insects (crickets and meal worms), small bits of unsweetened cereal (i.e. Cheerios), and cheese. Feed treats sparingly to avoid weight gain. Do not feed any almonds, red beans, potatoes or potato sprouts, tomatoes, or parsley. Fresh water should be available at all times. Food and water dishes should be cleaned often. Ceramic dishes are best as chewing will not damage them. Hamsters should always be provided with a small amount of meadow or timothy hay. This will help maintain health and digestion for your pet. ***Pisces recommends: Vita Hamster Food.***

Vitamins, Supplements & Treats: Pisces sells a variety of hamster treats that your pet will love. If your hamster is provided with an assortment of fresh fruits and veggies, then there is usually no need to provide any other vitamin or mineral supplement.

Handling: Hamsters can move quickly so be careful when handling that you do not drop them. They also don't have good depth perception and cannot tell when they are up high. Keep your hamster on the ground and supervise at all times. Wash your hands before handling your pet as the smell of food may encourage it to bite.

Health Care: Hamsters are susceptible to wet-tail, a form of diarrhea that can spread to other animals and can quickly become fatal. It can be caused by stress, spoiled food, a damp environment, soiled drinking water, or eating too much corn or too many fresh greens. If wet-tail is suspected remove veggies and fruits from your pet's diet, isolate the sick animal, and please seek veterinary advice.

The incisors of rodents such as hamsters continue to grow throughout their lives. It is important that your pet has enough toys or blocks to chew on, so it can wear down its teeth, otherwise it will have difficulty eating and a veterinarian will have to correct the problem. ***Pisces recommends: Living World Small Animal Mineral Block and 8in1 Block Bites.***

Grooming: Hamsters spend much of their time grooming themselves, so they do not require baths or brushing.

Exercise/Toys: Hamsters do require regular exercise to maintain their health. A wheel should be provided in the cage, however if you choose a wire wheel ensure that the spaces are small enough that your hamster's feed can't get caught. Place other items in its cage for entertainment and exercise, such as wooden houses, ladders, tunnels, and chew toys. Pisces sells leashes and collars for hamsters. These can be worn when it is outside its cage to prevent it from getting lost. You may also place your hamster in a hamster ball to roll around on the floor. Do so for only 5 to 10 minutes or the constant motion can be stressful. Supervise your pet at all times, and always keep the ball on the floor. Never let it roll down the stairs.

Safe Handling of Small Animals*: As with all living creatures, small animals can carry microorganisms which can make people ill. To reduce the chances of infection, always follow these safe handling steps:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after you handle your pet, its food and anything it has touched.
- Keep your pet in a habitat designed for it; do not let your pet roam around the home without proper supervision.
- Keep your pet, its food dishes and cage components out of the kitchen.
- Don't nuzzle or kiss your pet.
- Infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with a compromised immune system have a greater risk of infection. Extra caution should be taken when they are in contact with any animal. Children under 5 should handle reptiles only under adult/parent supervision.

Recommended Books: This care sheet is designed to provide you with some basic information on your new pet. To learn more about how to care for your pet, ***Pisces recommends Hamsters: A complete Pet Owner's Manual by Barrons Books.***

Recommended Supplies:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wire cage <input type="checkbox"/> Pine/aspen shavings or other soft bedding <input type="checkbox"/> Ceramic food dish <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle <input type="checkbox"/> Vita hamster seed <input type="checkbox"/> Wheel & hamster ball | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Chew block/mineral stone <input type="checkbox"/> House for sleeping <input type="checkbox"/> Timothy hay <input type="checkbox"/> Treats <input type="checkbox"/> Collar & leash for hamsters |
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Your New Pet: It is the responsibility of any pet owner to provide their pet with regular veterinary care to maintain their pet's health and to prevent illness.

Should you experience any problems with your new pet, contact Pisces Pet Emporium. We will make every effort to assist you, but we may refer you to a qualified veterinarian if the problem is beyond our ability to treat.

A pet is a large responsibility and should not be purchased without due consideration. Pets should never be released into the wild.



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**Safe handling information courtesy of PIJAC Canada*