

Ten Things to Know Before Adopting a Hamster



- 1** One Hamster per Cage: Hamsters are loners and two hamsters in the same cage will begin to fight and eventually, one may kill the other.
- 2** Hamsters & Children: With proper care, hamsters live 2 to 3 years. If the hamster is for a child, make sure an adult is always involved to supervise and make decisions for good, nurturing care.

3 Sleeping Habits: Hamsters are nocturnal. They sleep during the day and become active in the evening. Interfering with this normal cycle may cause stress, biting, health problems, and possibly early death.

4 Bedding: Carefresh or Aspen bedding is recommended. Never use cedar or pine as these can cause damage to the liver, respiratory system, and other health problems. For nesting material use plain unscented toilet paper. Fluffy nest bedding is dangerous as a hamster could accidentally ingest some of the bedding, potentially causing a bowel blockage, or possibly tangle a limb in it.

5 Cage & Accessories: Be sure to have the cage is ready before you bring your hamster home! Hamsters are brilliant escape artists. Be careful when allowing the hamster out of his cage. Make sure the cage latch is very secure when your hamster is inside. A wide selection of cages is available. Do some investigating in books, web sites, and pet stores. Solid flooring is best for hamsters. Round cages are not recommended, as hamsters love all the little corners of a square cage. Buy a cage the hamster cannot chew through. If the hamster can reach it, the hamster can even chew through the wire mesh of an aquarium cover. In the cage, provide a little sleeping house, tubes to crawl through, and a hamster wheel.



It is better to have a solid hamster wheel (check out Wodent Wheels), as a hamster can injure himself on an open wheel. You can intertwine paper from a paper bag through the rungs of the wheel to make it safer. You can also put a little bowl of clean play sand in the cage (Toys R Us sells play sand that is very nice.) and hamsters will use it as a potty. Clean the sand every couple of days.

6 Food & Water: Stick with a good quality commercial food like Harry Hamster Food. Use a water bottle instead of a bowl. Water in a bowl can become contaminated and often gets knocked over. A water bottle will keep the water clean and prevent it from getting into bedding materials. Offer small servings of fresh veggies (stay away from iceberg lettuce). Recommended are carrots, cucumbers, apples (no apple seeds), and grapes. Also good as treats are plain Cheerios and whole-wheat toast. If you are not sure if a substance is good for your hamster, do not feed it. Never feed chocolate.

7 Hamster Ball: If you like this toy for helping your hamster get exercise, make sure the cover is on tightly, or use tape to secure the cover. Keep a hamster in the ball for no longer than 30 minutes. Teach children to be gentle and not to kick or roll the ball, which will put extreme stress on your hamster.

8 Biting & Handling: Hamsters are known for biting. They do not like to be held. They are more prone to bite if they are startled or woken from a deep sleep, or if your hands smell like another animal or food. Handle your hamster gently. If your hamster does not like being picked up, you can put a couple of sunflower seeds in a little container and let the hamster crawl into the container; then allow the hamster to crawl unto your hand. Do not allow other animals like cats, dogs, and ferrets to be around when you are handling your hamster.

9 Teeth: Hamster teeth are continually growing and, under normal circumstances, teeth will grind down. Provide hard things for your hamster to chew on, like wooden blocks from a pet store, paper towel rolls, and an occasional piece of dog biscuit to gnaw on. If your hamster cannot eat properly, or cannot close his mouth, take him to a veterinarian who will trim his teeth.

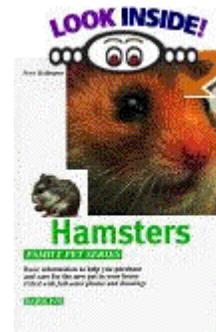
10 Illness: Illness can progress rapidly in small animals. Find a vet who treats small animals. Timely treatment can save your hamster's life.

Helpful Resources:

Barron's Family Pet Series: Hamsters by Peter Hollmann



Barron's A Complete Pet Owner's Manual: Dwarf Hamsters by Sharon Vanderlip



www.russelrabbit.com (Harry Hamster Food) "Supreme Pet Foods"

<http://www.transoniq.com/> (order "Wodent Wheels", solid hamster wheels, from this web site.) Wodent Wheels are the only exercise wheels recommended and approved by the ASPCA.

<http://hamsterific.com> – "Hamsterific"



Animal Rights Coalition, P.O. Box 8750, Minneapolis, MN 55408 www.animalrightscoalition.com