



Guide to Syrian Hamsters

Latin Name – *Mesocricetus auratus*
Scientific Order – Rodentia
Average Adult Size – 5 - 7 inches long
Average Life Span – up to 3 years
Diet – Omnivores



General Information

Also known as the Golden Hamster, it is the second largest hamster breed and one of the type most commonly kept as a pet. It was in the late 1930's that they were successfully bred and domesticated.

They have stout bodies with tails much shorter than their body length. They have small furry ears and short legs with wide feet. Their elongated pouches store food to eat later; and they are able to store a lot of food in their pouches. They also have poor eyesight and therefore, rely on their sense of smell to guide them.

Behaviour

Most are solitary animals and when housed with others may fight, which can even end fatally. When mating, it is advisable to separate the male and female soon afterwards, as they have been known to attack each other.



Hamsters are primarily nocturnal but can sometimes be active early morning or late evening. They like to burrow and will carry food in their pouches to areas they have created so as to store and then nestle down. They also like to chew to maintain incisor teeth.

Equipment Required



- Cage/habitat – Either Aquarium or wire cage are suitable. As they are quite active when awake it is vital they have enough space. Also you need to ensure that they are securely locked preventing the Hamster escaping and well ventilated. The habitat must allow for a layer of bedding for hamsters to dig and tunnel into.
- Water bottle which attaches to the cage.
- Food bowl – Preferably a weighted bowl so that this cannot be easily tipped over.
- Food – Hamster Mix, high quality pellets and a gradual introduction to certain fruit and veg. **CHECK FIRST AS SOME FRUIT AND VEG ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR HAMSTERS.**
- Mineral Chews.



Bedding materials – such as Norfolk Industries shredded paper flakes bedding see product details at - <https://www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/product/recycled-paper-bedding/>



- Exercise wheel – smooth wheel so that small feet cannot get caught in between rungs.
- Wooden chews – designed with hamsters in mind.
- Tubes – such as Norfolk Industries Chewy tubes complete with bedding, to provide hideaway place and help with chewing ability. See product details at <https://www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/product/chewy-tubes-recycled-paper/>





- Animal House – such as Norfolk Industries Small Animal house, see product details at



<https://www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/product/animal-house-small/>

Maintenance Tasks

- Clean out the aquarium/cage at least once a week and fully wash out with mild soap and water. Allow to fully dry before reintroducing the hamster.
- Clean out any leftover foods each day to avoid it going mouldy.
- Ensure that food and fresh water are provided daily. Limit the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables to twice a week.
- A variety of Hamster Treats can be purchased – do not feed in large quantities as these can be high in sugar and cause your hamster to become obese. Maximum of 10% of total food intake.
- Provide clean bedding materials when cleaning out or more often if necessary.

Grooming and Hygiene

- Short haired Hamsters normally do not need grooming as they tend to keep themselves clean and tidy. Long haired ones need to be gently groomed with a soft brush about once a week.
- Long teeth or nails may need trimming and this is best carried out by a veterinarian.



General Health Conditions

- Check your hamster's nose daily as a wet and runny nose can indicate a cold or an irritation.
- Make sure their eyes are not watery; as this could mean that due to burrowing something has gotten into their eyes.
- Diarrhoea can be caused by stress or too much fruit and vegetables.
- Wet tail is a very serious condition which also causes diarrhoea. It is a bacterial infection in the gut and will have an unpleasant smelling discharge. Please seek immediate attention from a Veterinarian.
- Mites cause the hamster to continually scratch their skin leaving it red and sore. Any skin problems contact a Veterinarian.
- Malocclusim – over grown teeth. Get the Veterinarian to trim these.



General Care Information

The Syrian hamster needs plenty of attention and become attached to their owners. They need to have several suitable toys to interact with these include the wheel (not for longhaired ones), cardboard tubes and plastic houses.



Holding your hamster – Hamsters can bite, so do not surprise them or pick up when they have just woken. Must be done with due care and attention so as not to cause stress. Allow them to investigate your hands in their own time. They should be picked up by cupping the hamster with two hands after which you carefully open your hands and you will find the hamster sitting there. If this is carried out regularly hamsters become comfortable with being handled.

Temperature – The aquarium/cage should be kept at room temperature. The aquarium/habitat should not be exposed to extremes of temperature, so ensure that it is not near direct sunlight or in a draught.

Washing Hands – Always ensure that you wash your hands after handling hamster or cleaning out their aquarium/cage.

Finally, do not lose sight of your hamster! When they are out of their cage ensure they are in a secure area or plastic ball.

Information supplied by –



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