

Warren Woods Veterinary Hospital

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Basic Hamster Care

General Information:

- Hamsters are members of the rodent family.
- Like other rodents, their teeth are open-rooted and grow continuously throughout their lives.
- Hamsters are known as “escape-artists” and cages must be well secured! They are also notorious chewers and will try to chew out of their enclosures.
- They are nocturnal, meaning they are active at night.
- Hamsters should be housed individually to avoid fighting.

Housing:

- Cages should be constructed of wire mesh with solid plastic or aluminum bases. Wood, soft metal or soft plastic is poor choices because hamsters can chew through these materials.
- Glass fish tanks with mesh tops are also OK, but completely enclosed plastic housing do not have enough ventilation and should NOT be used.
- Minimum size requirements are 20" x 20" x 6-10" high. There must be enough room for an exercise wheel, a nest area to sleep, and 1-2 corners open for urination and defecation.
- Newspaper, shredded paper, recycled paper litter (CareFresh, Yesterday's News), corn cob litter and wood stove pellets are all acceptable bedding materials for hamsters. Cedar and pine shavings can be toxic and should NOT be used.
- Bedding must be changed quite often (1 -2 times per week or more) to prevent the build-up of urine and stool.
- Facial tissue (Kleenex®) may be used for nesting material, and commercially available nesting fiber should be avoided.
- The ideal room temperature for hamsters is 65 to 70°F, with 30-70% humidity.

Diet:

- Commercial hamster pellets with at least 16% protein are recommended. Avoid pellets mixed with seeds & dried fruit. Lafeber's Critter Cakes and Critter Berries are also acceptable choices.
- Remove uneaten food from the cage daily.
- Treats such as small pieces of apple, walnuts, raisin and salad greens may be given in small quantities. No more than ½ teaspoon per day.
- Water is best given with a small bottle, and changed daily.
- Provide natural wood sticks or blocks for chewing.