

Proper Hamster Care

Housing

You want to be sure to provide your hamster with plenty of space and a safe and suitable environment for them to call their own! Many pet stores and website sell adorable hamster cages, but sadly most of these are not enough space for a hamster to have a happy life. It is important to provide your hamster with a minimum of 450 square inches of space in their habitat. Because of this, most commercial hamster cages can be ruled out as being too small, although there are some, such as the Kaytee systems that can be made larger by connecting multiple cages with tubing. If you plan to use a wire cage, you must make sure the spacing between the wiring is at most 1/4 inch wide, or else you could be risking an escaped hamster! Fish tanks and rubber tubs can become wonderful hamster habitats, but it is very important to make sure they allow for proper ventilation. Having a mesh ceiling or windows on the rubber tub or a mesh ceiling on the fish tank can allow for more air flow and ventilation. At Wayward Ranch we provide a large hamster cage with plenty of space for exploration and enrichment.

Within their environment, you want to be sure they are completely safe. Not everything that has been designed for a hamster is safe for your hamster so be sure to do your research! They will often chew the items in their cage, so you want to be sure they are made of safe materials. Also, you want to be sure they have clean bedding. We suggest using paper bedding (preferably natural), and it is very important to stay away from wood shavings, especially Cedar which can cause respiratory issues. Keep in mind these guys are mischievous but an entertained/exercised hamster is less likely to get themselves into trouble! Make sure you have plenty of hamster safe toys, puzzles, and items for them to engage with to stay busy.

Diet

It is very important to have your hamster on a healthy and adequate diet for them to be their healthiest! Unfortunately many store bought diets do not give your hamster the variety they need in their diet as omnivores, so we suggest you combine two feeds to make your own. We personally combine the Higgins Sunburn seed mix with the Mazuri rat/mouse pellets to give them a 50/50 mixture. This gives them a nice balance of fiber, protein, and fat. Water should always be fresh and offered to your hamster at all times.

Veterinary Care

Plan to provide your hamster with routine veterinary care which at the minimum is yearly check ups with a veterinarian, so be sure to locate a veterinary close by who will see your hamster before you make plans to bring him home!

Handling

Hamsters are very fragile animals so you have to be very careful when you pick them up or otherwise handle them. You want to go slowly and be very gentle when picking up your hamster. If you hold them too tightly they may become afraid and bite defensively. You also want to be sure you hold them close to the ground until you are completely confident handling them, in case they find a way to escape your hands! Make sure to handle your hamster regularly, up to multiple times a day so they can be as socialized as possible! A lonely or frustrated hamster is more likely to nip the next time you go to pick them up.

Enrichment

It is so important to provide hamsters with plenty of enrichment and outlets for their energy! You want to focus a few different things when looking into new enrichment for your hamster. First, think about what they will need to properly exercise. A wheel in their habitat and a ball they can go in to explore the rest of your house are both a great idea! You also want to give them plenty of hiding places where they can bring their food to eat or sleep. It can be easy to make your own hideaways out of wood, but you must be sure the supplies you use are safe in case the hamsters chew on them. Finally, brain teasers like mazes or puzzles are great enrichment for your new hammie!