

Hamster



FACT SHEET

Pictured Hamster : **Golden / Syrian**

Genus : **Mesocricetus**

Specie : **M. auratus**

Male is called a : **Boar**

Female is called a : **Sow**

Young are called a : **Pups**

Adult Weight : **100 - 170g**

The average life expectancy : **1 1/2 - 2 Years**

Oestrus : **Every 4 days, lasts 12 - 14hrs**

Gestation period : **From 16 to 21 days**

Breeding age of a male is : **6 - 8 Weeks**

Breeding age of a female is : **6 - 8 Weeks**

Average Litter Size Varies : **8 - 10**

Young are born : **Bare/Bald & Blind**

Birth Weight : **2g**

Weaning Age : **4 Weeks**

Eyes open : **from 13 - 15 days**

HANDLING

When picking up a hamster placing one hand round the shoulders with the thumb under the lower jaw to prevent biting.

Hamsters have extremely poor eye sight, remember to take a slow approach to picking up and handling a hamster as calmly as possible as a hamster can sense nervousness and may act upon it and possibly bite, even more so if you wake one as they do not like to be woken up. The more you handle a hamster the more confident it can become.



SEXING YOUR HAMSTER

The main difference when sexing hamsters is the distance between the anus and the gentiles, which is much greater on a male hamster. It is more obvious and easier to sex after 1 month of age when the testicles are more prominent on the male.

when picking up a hamster as described above face the belly of the hamster towards you and then look for the following to determine the sex.

MALE : Will have a rounded area which is the indication of the scrotal sack between the penis and anus with a large spacing between. You will also notice a male does not have nipples.

FEMALE : Will not have testicles. The anus and vagina will also be closer together and she will have up to 12 nipples in 2 parallel rows.

FEEDING

Hamsters eat plants & insects. The correct food for hamsters should be a mix of the two and a mature hamster can eat between 20-35g per day,

Young hamsters require a diet of veg, fruits and wheat. You can add small amount of peanuts, sunflower seeds and corn as treats.

Mineral licks should be provided minerals and to help hamsters maintain healthy teeth.

You can also introduce minerals also by giving vegetables such as : **celery, carrots and tomatoes.**

HOUSING & HUSBANDRY

Caging : When buying a cage you need to make sure the hamster has lots of room to run around. Preferably a wire cage is best, the bars of the cage should have a gap no greater than 12.5mm with a secure lid that is well ventilated. Water bottles need to have a steel spout so they cannot be chewed and cleaned daily with a bottle brush. Provide a metal or ceramic food bowl, as a plastic one can be gnawed on.

Enrichment : Give your hamster plenty of toys and entertainment for example: Branches, Ropes, tunnels etc. hamsters are great at escaping. If you hamster becomes board it could chew plastics of the cage and escape.

Provide a hiding area for the hamster so it can have an area of privacy to relax, you should only ever house 1 Syrian hamster in a cage as they fight when they hit maturity.

Cleaning

Every day water bottles should be emptied, cleaned, refilled and put back in.

Food (vegetables) to be removed and fresh veg to be added each day.

At least once a week (More frequent if required) replace all bedding and use the correct disinfectants and cleaning apparatus when doing so. Failure to do so could end up in a trip to the vet.

When cleaning always make sure you use rodent friendly liquids. like "keep it clean"

Bedding : Hay and wood shavings, Try to avoid cedar and pine shavings as they could contain **phenols** which is harmful to hamster.

Requirements & Equipment when purchasing

Cage, Food-bowl (not plastic), Water-bottle (steel spout), Bedding-shavings, cleaning equipment, Hay, Toys, Vitamins, Salt lick.

HEALTH CHECK

Always check your hamster as much as possible to ensure a healthy companion, here is a list of checks to do to maintain a health animal.

A healthy hamster will spend most of its day asleep, but when awake it will spend most of its time cleaning and creating a shiny smooth coat.

Check inner ears : Make sure they are clear and have no rendering.

Eyes : make sure they fully open and are clear and have no discharge.

Nose : Clean of dirt and discharge and of natural colour.

Teeth : Make sure they are straight, parallel and not too long.

Body : An unhealthy rat will have a hunched appearance.

Coat : Make sure the coat is smooth, shinny and not patchy.

Claws/Toes : Make sure none are missing, damaged or deformed or nails over grown.

Anus & Genitals : Check for discharge and inflammation from the penis/vaginal/ area and diarrhoea from the anus or a wet tail as this is an indicator of a bacterial disease

Disease / Disorder	Cause	Visual Signs / Symptoms	Treatment / Prevention
Sarcastic Mange	Highly contagious but rare in hamsters	Severe irritation and hair loss	Seek Veterinary advice
Ringworm	Fungal	Severe patch's of hair loss which leads to scratching and self - injury	Use PPE and quarantine the animal as can transfer to human and seek veterinary advice
Salmonellosis		Diarrhoea, lack of movement and lethargy followed by death.	Use PPE and quarantine the animal as can transfer to human and seek veterinary advice
Teeth & Nails	Continuous growth and lack of items to gnaw on.	Weight loss	Trim & cutback on a regular basis. add mineral block to gnaw on.
Sleepers Disease	a rise in temperature of surroundings to and above 30c	lifeless & Stiff, tremble when disturbed	Move to a cooler spot, do not place in direct sunlight or in front of a direct heat source
Tyzzer's Disease	Contaminated food or bedding which has been infected by a mouse with a disease called bacillus	loss of appetite, diarrhoea, lethargy, weight loss and death.	Use PPE and quarantine the animal and seek veterinary advice
Wet Tail	Bad Husbandry, dietary changes	Wet and inflamed area around the tail and anus.	Seek Veterinary advice, antibiotics may be available.
Constipation (Impaction)	Eating incorrect bedding, Dehydration	Swollen or discoloured abdomen, lack of appetite, lethargy, swollen anus cavity	Seek Veterinary advice.
Hibernation	Temperature drops below 10c	appears unconscious or dead, extremely low respiratory response	slowly raise temperature to 25-27c, using a heating pad
Impacted Cheek Pouches	Dental issues, Infections & Wounds	Swelling on one or both sides of the face, lack of appetite, cheek rubbing	Seek veterinary advice as the animal may need to be treated in addressing its wounds.