

Hamster care basics

Feeding

- **Commercial food:** About one-two tablespoons of pellets or seed mix once a day, supplemented by treats as described below, will be enough. Even though they're much smaller, dwarf hamsters are very active and have comparable calorie needs to Syrian hamsters.
- **Treats:** A small amount of greens plus a floret of cauliflower, a slice of apple, or several raisins (or an equivalent amount of other appropriate treats) once a day is plenty to supplement your hamster's commercial chow. Give treats in small quantities to reduce waste and decrease the amount of time you spend looking for spoiled produce in your hamster's cage.
- **Hard treats:** Commercial snacks that help wear down your hamster's teeth can be offered once a week.
- Note that hamsters instinctively hoard food in "secret" stashes in their cage, so don't feel compelled to refill an empty bowl.

Housing

- The ideal temperature range for hamsters is approximately 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Hamster housing should be located away from strong heat sources such as direct sunlight, wood stoves, or fireplaces. This is especially important if your hamster is kept in an aquarium or modular unit, both of which have poor ventilation and can heat up quickly.
- Don't put your hamster's cage in an unheated room, breezeway, garage, or other cold location. When the temperature falls below 60 degrees, your hamster's activity level will decrease, and temperatures below 50 degrees are likely to prompt hibernation. Temperatures below freezing can kill your hamster.
- Place the cages in a draft-free area (e.g., away from doors and on an elevated surface).

Cleaning

- Please keep your hamster in a hamster ball or small secure enclosure while cleaning their habitat.
- Bedding should be changed regularly when it is soiled.
- Small animals are very sensitive to harsh cleaners, it is best to clean your hamster enclosure with dilute Dawn dish soap (rinse thoroughly), or a dilute white vinegar solution.

Handling

- Since your hamster may be pregnant, avoid handling her as much as possible to avoid disrupting birth.
- Do not handle newborn babies or mother after she has given birth. The babies are very fragile at this time, and the mother will be irritable and defensive if she is handled
- Notify the Foster Coordinator if your hamster has given birth or appears injured or ill