

# Our Hamster Fact Sheet

*Home Sweet Hammy Home • Hamster Care/Education*

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## Thank you for your interest in adopting one of our hamsters!

Our mission is to educate owners and potential owners about the care and well-being of their small companion. This fact sheet is meant as a guideline for anyone who already owns or is considering ownership of these fascinating pets. Although they are small, owning a hamster is a big responsibility. Our goal is to improve hamster care in our community. Why? So that owners will make an educated decision in their small pet care. Our hearts break each time we see a large Syrian hamster in a tiny cage advertised on Craigslist or Offerup. They need bigger living spaces to thrive, even dwarf hamsters. Just because they are little animals does not mean they should be forced to live in little spaces! It is very rewarding to see a hamster go from living in a small cage to a larger habitat! Each of our own hamsters have been rescues and we have experienced changes in them since coming into our home that has inspired us to create bin cages and make them available all over our city. We hope to change hamster care for the better as well as come along side owners and provide support. Have questions? Please ask!

## Hamster Species



Dwarf Winter  
White Russian

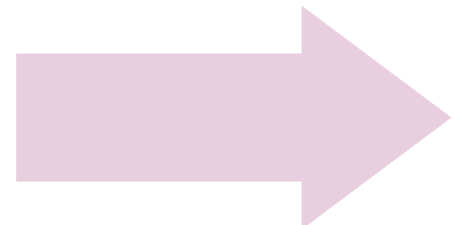
Syrian

Dwarf  
Campbell's  
Russian






Chinese  
Dwarf

Roborovski  
Dwarf

These five species are kept in captivity as pets all over the world. Each species is unique with different characteristics. The following chart will help you identify your species of hamster or distinguish between potential hamsters you will be bringing into your family.



Please note that each species has a common name, scientific name and alternative name. There is much confusion surrounding these names. Pet stores and backyard breeders like to call hamsters by “cute” alternative names that will attract more buyers. For example Syrians are labeled as “Teddy bear” hamsters in one of our local pet stores in Tucson, AZ. Teddy bear sounds cute and can attract more attention than Syrian. This chart outlines each species and gives a short overview of their actual names.

Picture	Common Name	Scientific Name	Alternative Names	Physical Appearance
	Syrian	Mesocricetus auratus	Golden Hamster, Fancy Bear, Teddy Bear Hamster, Standard Hamster, Black Bear Hamster, Panda Bear Hamster	Multi-colors; banded markings; long or short hair; largest of all species; solitary animals <b>must</b> be housed alone
	Dwarf Winter White Russian	Phodopus sungorus	Siberian Hamster Djungarian Hamster Calico Hamster	Dorsal stripe down middle of back. White/grey can be all grey or all white
	Roborovski Dwarf	Phodopus roborovskii	Robos Minis Dwarf Sized	Smallest of all species, has fluffy beard and small stubby face.
	Chinese Dwarf	Cricetulus griseus	Chinesies China Doll Chin-chins	White/tan/grey; stripe down back; longest tail of all species; <b>must</b> be housed alone
	Dwarf Campbell's Russian	Phodopus campbelli	Russian Campbell Golden Campbell	Grey, white, tan; longer shaped face

## Housing Hamsters

**NOTE: PET STORES WILL HOUSE SYRIAN SIBLING SETS TOGETHER IN SMALL LIVING QUARTERS, BUT NEVER DOES THAT MAKE IT OKAY FOR OWNERS TO DO SO ONCE BRINGING THEIR HAMSTERS HOME. DO NOT USE PET STORES AS AN EXAMPLE. THEIR GOAL IS TO MAKE MONEY, NOT SET GOOD EXAMPLES FOR THE COMMUNITY!**





## Housing Hamsters (continued)

**Syrians** and **Chinese** hamsters **MUST** be housed **alone** as they are solitary animals.

**Campbells**, **Winter Whites** and **Roborovskis** can be kept in **same sex pairs** if they are from the same litter, but keep in mind fights can break out any time and owners of pairs must be ready and willing to separate them at the first hint of aggression as well as provide a 2nd adequate habitat.

**When pairs are kept in the same habitat, 2 of everything must be provided. This means 2 water bottles, 2 food dishes, 2 wheels and plenty of toys and accessories.**



Pictured here: suitable bin cage setups & materials

**Please Note: Under no circumstances should two hamsters from different species be kept together! Nor should male and female pairs be housed together. Breeding of hamsters can and will take place if this guideline is ignored. Female hamsters go into heat every 4 nights! Breeding of pet store hamsters is discouraged for many reasons. For more information inquire in person.**



# Basic Hamster Care

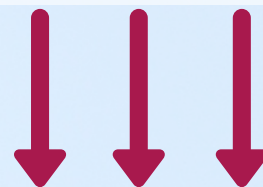
Each hamster species needs the same basic care, which includes the following:

- A large habitat with at least 4 inches of substrate lining the bottom
- Nesting material (Not cotton fluff!)
- Proper nutrition and fresh water daily
- Appropriately sized running wheel with a solid running surface
- Sand box, hide-away houses, accessories such as tubes and tunnels, and toys

Hamsters also need plenty of items to chew on as their teeth grow throughout their life spans. Wood chews with safe substances on them are fine. Our favorite items are Whimsey chews, which our pets love. An **unsafe** option is a product called Snak Shaks, which are made out of sawdust and very dangerous for a hamster to ingest, even though they are marketed as fully edible. Unfortunately, many small pet owners are unaware of the dangers of this product.



**Read on for a breakdown of hamster care items!**



## **Habitat/Substrate/ Nesting Material:**

Housing requirements are currently at a minimum of 450 inches of continuous floor space meaning that levels in cages do not count and neither does two cages connected together. Most cages sold in pet stores are too small. To adopt from Home Sweet Hammy Home a **minimum of 600 inches** is required. This is because many of our hamsters come from small enclosures and we do not want them to have to return to one after then have been housed properly during their time with us. The substrate you choose to put at the bottom of your habitat to collect waste and control odor can be anything except for pine or cedar shavings which have oils that are toxic to a hamster's system. Unscented paper bedding such as Kaytee Clean and Cozy or Carefresh, are popular choices. **Never use cottonballs or fluff bedding sold in pet stores as these items are extremely dangerous for your hamster.**



# Hamster Care Items (continued)

## **Habitat/Substrate/ Nesting Material (continued):**

The threads in cotton fluff can become wrapped around your hamster's limbs, or intestines if swallowed, and cause tremendous pain and even death. Instead simple paper towels or toilet tissue are fine to use. Just rip them in sections, place them on top of the substrate at night and your hamster will build his or her nest with them the next morning before going to sleep for the day. Avoid scented bedding as it damages respiratory systems in small animals. **Unscented products are always best choices.**

## **Proper Nutrition/Fresh Water Daily**

There are many commercial hamster foods on the market and each one has its pros and cons. Some owners make their own food. Along with a commercial food, fresh fruits and vegetables can and should be fed to your hamster and they will need to have a fresh supply of water daily. An extensive list of foods that can and cannot be fed is found on the California Hamster Association's website as well as Hubba-Hubba Hamstery and Strongbrews Hamstery websites, all found below.

## **Wheels**

We can't stress enough the importance of choosing the right wheel and wheel size. Wheels need to have solid running surfaces not mesh or wire. The size of the wheel needs to enable them to run with their backs straight. Many brands of wheels are not only silent, they achieve a proper exercise avenue for hamsters. Wodent wheels and Silent Spinners are popular choices. Unfortunately, local pet stores such as Petco and Petsmart don't stock the higher quality wheels we prefer to use so we order them from Etsy and Amazon. We'll be happy to discuss more about wheels with you in person.

## **Sand Boxes/Hide Houses/Accessories and Toys**

Sand boxes can be any container filled with dust free, sanitized sand. Your hamster may use their sand box as a potty which helps keep their cage cleaner. We use reptile sand due to the low amount of dust it produces. If you choose this option, just make sure to buy the kind without colors or calcium. If you choose children's play sand, bake it to eliminate any harmful bacteria unless the bag specifically states it was washed and dried. Never bathe your hamster with soap and water. This is very harmful for the oils in their coat. Hide houses are crucial, as hamsters like to build their nests under them and tubes and tunnels provide an interesting pass time as well as mimic their natural habitats in the wild. DIY toys can be found on many websites.

# Closing Thoughts

Education in proper hamster care is increasing. In as little as 5 years new studies have shown we cared for them wrong in the past. Unfortunately pet store employees still push the old way of care on customers to make fast sales. It is important to research constantly to ensure you are meeting your hamster's needs and are learning about his or her habits and characteristics so you are not startled when your pet does something you are not sure about. For example most hamsters pouch their food and un-pouch in a corner of their cage to eat it later at their leisure. This behavior is perfectly normal, yet some owners think their hamster is sick and constantly vomiting. This misconception and many others could be corrected with just a little research. Sand boxes can be any container filled with dust free, sanitized sand. Your hamster may use their sand box as a potty which helps keep their cage cleaner. We use reptile sand due to the low amount of dust it produces. If you choose this option, just make sure to buy the kind without colors or calcium. If you choose children's play sand, bake it to eliminate any harmful bacteria unless the bag specifically states it was washed and dried. Never bathe your hamster with soap and water. This is very harmful for the oils in their coat. Hide houses are crucial, as hamsters like to build their nests under them and tubes and tunnels provide an interesting pass time as well as mimic their natural habitats in the wild. DIY toys can be found on many websites.

## Resources

### Youtube Channels

- [Victoria Raechel](#)
- [Erin's Animals](#)
- [Munchies Place](#)

### Forums

- [Hamster Hideout](#)
- [Hamster Central](#)

### Websites

- [Cheeksandsqueekshamsters.com](#)
- [Strongbrew Hamstery](#)

