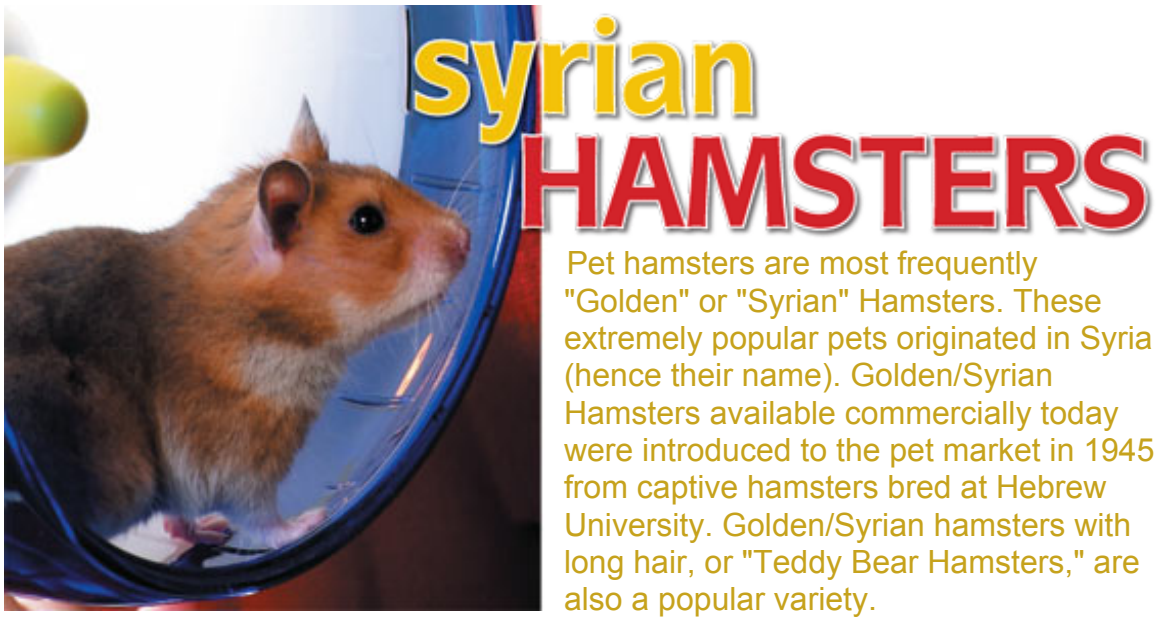
Syrian Hamsters

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Pet hamsters are most frequently "Golden" or "Syrian" Hamsters. These extremely popular pets originated in Syria (hence their name). Golden/Syrian Hamsters available commercially today were introduced to the pet market in 1945 from captive hamsters bred at Hebrew University. Golden/Syrian hamsters with long hair, or "Teddy Bear Hamsters," are also a popular variety.

Solitary by nature

Though Golden/Syrian Hamsters are raised as part of a litter, they will not tolerate the company of another hamster once they reach 10 weeks of age. They must be caged singly. Adult males will fight if caged together, sometimes killing one another. The breeding male must be removed from the litter.

Active at night

These nocturnal animals spend most of the day sleeping, waking in the early evening to enjoy an active night (usually running in an exercise wheel). Despite their active nature, Golden/Syrian Hamsters have a relatively short life span, averaging 2-2.5 years (though life spans of 4 years are on record).

Physical appearance

Golden/Syrian Hamsters are characterized by a very short tail, large cheek pouches, small eyes, and a variety of appealing coat colors. They are also one of the largest hamsters, making them easier to handle. Adults are generally 4"-6" long, but females can grow up to 7" in length. They have hairless feet, four toes on front feet and five toes on back feet.

Female Goldens

If you purchase a female Golden/Syrian Hamster, remember that they come into season approximately every 4 days, and smell strongly at those times. You may wish to move your hamster to a well-ventilated area to reduce the odor, but be careful to avoid drafts and maintain a warm temperature.

Docile & hardy pets

Golden/Syrian Hamsters are great, easy-to-keep pets. They react well to being handled. They do not move, urinate or defecate much, or even bite. Their ease of handling makes them especially good for children. Golden/Syrian Hamsters are very inexpensive pets, with a low purchase price and low lifetime maintenance costs. They are resistant to disease, and require minimal space, food, and bedding.

Golden/Syrian Hamster Facts:

Origin:	Syrian desert
Size:	4" to 6"; females are larger and heavier.
Life Span:	2 to 2-1/2 years on average.
Diet:	Hamster food, fresh vegetables, and yogurt.

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Water:	Provide fresh water every day.
Special Needs:	Hamster teeth grow continuously. Provide wood toys or other chew toys for chewing (avoid cedar or pine due to the natural, irritating oils they contain).
Vitamin Supplements:	Necessary. Add to water and provide a mineral block in the cage.

Breeding Facts:

Sexual Maturity:	4 to 6 months.
Fertility Cycle:	Females come into heat every four days.
Gestation Period:	16 to 18 days.
Cautions:	Do not allow the mother to feel threatened; she may eat the babies.

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