Hamster Glossary of Terms

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Aquarium

One of the three types of cage that your hamster can live in. If your hamster lives in an aquarium, make sure you have a secure lid on it.

Bedding

Bedding refers to the wood shavings or wood fiber shavings that you should put in the bottom of your hamster's cage. Hamsters sleep, play, and burrow in their bedding. They will also use one section as a toilet.

Burrow

This is when a hamster digs down into his bedding or nesting material - he is "burrowing." A burrow also refers to holes in the ground a hamster would live in if he lived outside in the wild.

Chew toys

These are wooden toys that your hamster can safely chew on to wear down his teeth. Chew toys can be actual toys, or they can be natural wood chews.

Chinese Hamster

Chinese hamsters are about the same size as dwarf hamsters. They are also known as Striped hamsters or Chinese Striped hamsters. They do best when kept alone because they may fight with other hamsters.

Daily diet

Feed your hamster a quality hamster food. It should contain seeds, dried vegetables, small grains and other healthy ingredients. Your hamster will only eat about one tablespoon a day, so only give him a little at a time. You should supplement his pellet food with fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, and a small amount of hay two or three times a week. You can also give your hamster treats once in a while, but not too much! Treats should only make up a tiny portion of his daily diet.

Dwarf Hamster

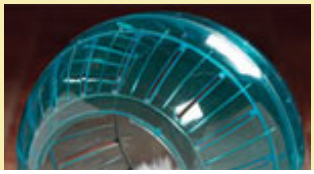
Dwarf hamsters are very small, and they are more social than other types of hamsters. They can be kept in pairs or small groups. There are a few different kinds of dwarf hamsters.

Exercise wheel

This toy helps your hamster to exercise and play in his cage. Many hamsters will run a mile or more on their exercise wheel in one night! For safety, use an exercise wheel with a solid surface or one that has a wire mesh surface.

Food bowl

Hamsters should be given their food in a bowl. A small, heavy ceramic bowl works best.



Hamster

A hamster is a rodent and one of the most popular small pets. How big they get and how they look depends on what kind of hamster they are. There are three main types of hamsters: Syrian hamsters, Dwarf hamsters, and Chinese hamsters.

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Hamster proof
This is when you make sure your hamster can safely play in a room outside his run-about ball. Block off all small spaces that he could squeeze under, and keep him in a small area. You should do this every time your hamster runs around loose outside his cage.

Nest box
This is an enclosed space that your hamster will use to sleep in and play in. Having a nest box makes him feel safe and secure. It can be made of cardboard, plastic, or wood. It should be filled with nesting material so he can make a comfy bed for himself.

Nocturnal
This means that your hamster is awake mostly at night. He will be awake sometimes during the day, but nocturnal animals are most active at night.

Plastic cage
One of the three types of cages that your hamster can live in. Plastic cages are a great way to make sure that your hamster gets lots of exercise, and with all the tunnels and tubes, they're very fun for hamsters.

Run-about ball
This is a large, plastic ball that you can put your hamster in to let him move around a room safely. Run-about balls are great for when you are cleaning your hamster's cage and need somewhere to put him. Do not use on a table, or near stairways.

Syrian Hamster
This is the most common pet hamster. They are also known as Golden hamsters, and the Syrian hamsters with long hair are known as Teddy Bear hamsters. You can only keep one Syrian hamster in a cage at a time.

Tame
A tame hamster is one that can be held without fear of biting. You can tame a hamster by first talking to him through the cage, then giving him treats from your hand, then allowing him to climb into your hand on his own, then picking him up.

Teddy Bear Hamster
A Teddy Bear hamster is a Syrian hamster with long hair.

Treat
A treat is something you can give your hamster once in a while. There are lots of different kinds of treats to choose from, but always make sure that treats make up only a very small amount of the food your hamster eats each day.

Water bottle
This is a plastic or glass bottle or tube that you hang on the side of your hamster's cage. We recommend using a water bottle rather than a water bowl to keep the water fresh and clean. Check the water bottle daily.

Wire cage
One of the three types of cage that your hamster can live in. Wire cages provide lots of ventilation and air flow, but make sure that you use a cage with a solid floor. Wire mesh floors can hurt your hamster's sensitive feet.

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