

## SHOPPING LIST:

- ✗ information leaflet about hamsters
- large cage
- 2 little nest boxes
- heavy feeding bowl
- water bottle
- floor covering (e.g. sawdust or forest soil litter + straw)
- injury-free exercise wheel
- roots for climbing
- hamster toilet
- hay (rich in herbs, dry, dust-free)
- dried herbs
- hamster food (premium food)
- treat sticks
- mineral stone, salt lick
- vitamin supplements
- wood for gnawing on (hardwood gnawing block, wicker bridge)
- disinfectant/detergent for cleaning the cage
- book about hamsters

For more tips and further information on hamsters visit our website at: [www.maxizoo.ie](http://www.maxizoo.ie)

## REPRODUCTION

1. Hamsters reproduce quicker than any other mammal. The females can become pregnant from the age of 6 weeks, but should only start reproducing after week 12.
2. The gestation period is approx. 16 days.
3. The average size of a litter is 6 yet can range between 2 and 15.
4. Baby hamster's eyes open after approx. 10-15 days.
5. The young can be separated from the mother after 4 weeks and are fully grown after 3 months.



## DO I LIKE COMPANY?

Golden hamsters are loners and for this reason can only be kept on their own.

On the other hand, dwarf hamsters like to live in pairs. To avoid breeding it is best to pair two animals of the same sex that have been used to each other from a very young age.

## UNSUITABLE TOYS

There is a wide variety of hamster toys in the shops. Unfortunately some of these are a great danger to the hamster, and they include:

Hamster balls: these are either fully or partly transparent plastic balls that are finished with small ventilation slits. A session in one of these balls can cause the animal extreme pain and injury. The hamster is not in a position to set itself free, let alone control the direction and speed of the ball. If it falls over or the ball collides with



normally asleep. Since these tubes are mainly transparent, they do not give the animal any opportunity to retreat or set itself free. These systems are worlds apart from a natural hamster construction.

Short tubes that are repeatedly interspersed with opaque hollows are much better. Also, a hamster should only go into the tubes voluntarily and should never be forced into them.

The circulation of air is severely limited in cages that are closed on all sides and the pet's perception of its surroundings is constricted. Smells and an accumulation of corrosive gases build up at the base of the enclosures in question, which cannot be avoided and which cause harm to the animal. Therefore, make absolutely sure that your cage has sufficient ventilation.

Hamster bedding made from synthetic fibre that does not state that it is "fully digestible" increases the danger of a blockage in the cheek pouches and can lead to constriction of the limbs/extremities. Hay is a far better nest building material.

Exercise wheels with spokes are to be avoided owing to the high risk of injury. For example, the animals can trap their limbs in the spokes and not be able to free them on their own.

A treadmill in the spokes reduces the risk of injury.

something (e.g. the wall) the hamster can be seriously injured.

Long tube systems are also unsuitable. As is already clearly stated on the packaging, children are encouraged to build constantly changing tube systems which the hamster is then forced into. Thus the animal is being put into stressful situations by force, mainly during the day as well - a time when it is



## My hamster

Everything you need to know about hamsters as pets.



Everything for your pet

[www.maxizoo.ie](http://www.maxizoo.ie)

## AM I THE RIGHT PET FOR YOU?

Hamsters are ideal pets for all the family. They don't need much room and are easy to look after. They are nocturnal and sleep during the day. Therefore, they are only suitable for older children and teenagers. The average life expectancy of a hamster is between 2 and 2.5 years.

## WHERE DO I ORIGINATE FROM?

The hamster originates from the deserts of Syria. They were first bred in Israel and Great Britain and were introduced to Europe as pets from there.



## WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE FOR ME TO LIVE?

The new home should obviously be a sufficient size with adequate space and be equipped with a little nest box, a second little box for storing food supplies and things for climbing (e.g. roots and branches). The distance between the bars ought to be narrow enough to prevent the hamster from escaping. Seek advice from the Maxi zoo team on the most suitable cage to buy. If the cage does have a second level then it must be made of plastic or wood. Steel grating should not be used under any circumstances. It is also important that the cage has horizontal and vertical bars since hamsters are good at, and love, climbing. The cage should be cleaned thoroughly once a week. Hamsters normally choose themselves a specific place in their home for use as a toilet area. This needs cleaning out daily. A hamster toilet relieves the burden of cleaning. It is imperative that the cage is placed in a somewhat elevated position because hamsters, like most other rodents, react to "danger from above" in an extremely jumpy fashion.

Heat from direct sun or a radiator, as well as draughts, high humidity and cigarette smoke are to be avoided at all times, since they can cause considerable harm to the hamster's health. Soft wood granules are good for using to cover the floor. Nest building material (e.g. fully digestible hamster bedding or hay) must be readily accessible in the cage at all times. Hamsters are very agile animals that love to be on the move. A safe exercise wheel in the cage helps them to burn off their excess energy.

It goes without saying that the cage should always be kept clean, since droppings, urine and stale food don't just smell unpleasant to human beings, but can also damage the animal's delicate lungs and make the hamster ill.

## HOW I SHOULD BE HANDLED?

Leave your hamster alone for the first few days because this will give it the opportunity to become better accustomed to its new surroundings.

Hamsters should only be handled when they are awake, otherwise they may bite in self-defence. If hamsters are persistently woken up they also get very stressed and this shortens their life expectancy.

Let your hamster get used to the sound of your voice and smell by talking to it and putting your hand into the cage. Let it eat special hamster treats out of your hand. Then you can slowly gather it up, too. Put one hand under its body and the other hand over its body so that both hands span the entire body. Smaller



## HEALTH CHECKLIST

### A healthy Hamster:

- moves nimbly and quickly,
- has clean fur, most importantly around the nose, mouth eyes and anus area,
- has a thick coat,
- breathes without making an audible noise,
- has a straight back,
- is unharmed and has no open wounds.



children should be supervised by a grown-up when they are handling the hamster, and special care must be taken to ensure that they do not drop it.

## WHAT DO I LIKE TO EAT?

Hamsters need a varied diet: grains satisfy the necessary carbohydrate intake and are also a source of fibre: fruit and vegetables also provide the animals with fluid and vitamins; animal protein is vitally important for building up the body. Prepared hamster food supplemented by some fresh food is ideal.

Shallow, heavy ceramic or earthenware bowls



are harmful to a hamster because hamsters cannot tolerate salt, spices or even fat. A sudden change in diet or rotten food can lead to intestinal complaints with fatal consequences.

## KEEP ME FIT AND HEALTHY

If you notice that your hamster has lost its appetite, has diarrhoea, is coughing, sneezing, has a runny nose or is showing any other signs of illness it is best to take it straight to a vet.

Hamsters should always be kept in an environment where the temperature is at least 18–22 °C. If the temperature drops below 10 °C the hamster goes into hibernation, which is extremely dangerous for its health.

Stress and rotten food can lead to severe diarrhoea, which must be treated by a vet immediately. Therefore, remove stale food every day (even the food that has been hoarded away in its special store room) and protect it from stressful situations.

