**Hamster Facts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Average Adult Size** | 4 to 5 inches long |
| **Average Life Span** | up to 2 to 3 years with proper care |
| **Diet** | omnivore |

**Diet**

A well-balanced hamster diet consists of:

* High-quality hamster lab blocks and limited amounts of grains, vegetables, fruits and Timothy hay.
* Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water, changed daily.
* Do ***not*** feed chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions. Avoid sugar and high fat treats.

**Feeding**

Things to remember when feeding your hamster:

* Fresh food and water should always be available.
* A limited amount of grain, vegetables, fruits or Timothy hay can be given daily but should not exceed 10% of their total diet
* Vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

**Housing**

* Hamsters acclimate well to average household temperatures, not to exceed 80°F; be cautious of extreme temperature changes. The habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
* Habitat should be plastic, metal or glass and escapeproof with a solid bottom; there should be plenty of room for the hamster to exercise and play. It is best to provide the largest habitat possible.
* 1-2" of bedding should be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes high quality paper bedding, crumbled paper bedding, or hardwood shavings. Cedar-based products are not recommended.
* House adult hamsters separately. Different types of small animals should ***not*** be housed together.

**Normal Behavior**

* Play during the night and rest during the day (nocturnal) but can adjust to your schedule.
* Easy to handle but may nip if suddenly awakened from a nap or startled.
* Chew on objects to maintain incisor teeth, which grow continuously; ensure they have plenty of wood chew sticks or mineral chews.

**Habitat Maintenance**

* Clean and disinfect the habitat and its contents at least once a week with a 3% bleach solution. Rinse and allow to dry completely before placing the hamster back into the habitat.
* Remove wet spots daily; change bedding at least once a week, or more often as necessary.

**Grooming & Hygiene**

* Hamsters stay clean and rarely need baths, but can be spot-cleaned with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipes if needed. Some hamsters enjoy an occasional dust bath. Hairless hamsters benefit from a small amount of non-toxic aloe-based lotion rubbed into their skin to keep it soft.
* It is normal for a hamster's teeth to be yellow; cleaning is not necessary.
* Consult with a veterinarian if a hamster's teeth seem too long.

**Health**

**Signs of a Healthy Animal**

* Active, alert, and sociable
* Eats and drinks regularly
* Healthy fur and clear eyes
* Breathing is unlabored
* Walks normally

**Red Flags**

* weight loss
* abnormal hair loss
* diarrhea or dirty bottom
* distressed breathing
* lethargic
* eye or nasal discharge
* skin lesions
* overgrown teeth

**Common Health Issues**

| **Health Issue** | **Symptoms or Causes** | **Suggested Action** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Diabetes | Frequent urination and lethargy. | Consult with a veterinarian. |
| Diarrhea | Loose stool caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness. | Consult with a veterinarian to determine cause and treatment. |
| Malocclusion | Overgrown teeth. | Consult with a veterinarian to have teeth trimmed regularly. |
| Mites | External parasites that cause hamsters to lose patches of hair. | Consult a veterinarian for treatment. |