

Pet Care of a Hamster



Hamsters are a member of the rodent family, along with rats, mice, gerbils and chinchillas.

What do we know about these little mammals?

Diet	Environment
Hamsters eat food pellets, or a mix of different seeds and nuts. They must always have fresh, clean water, which they reach from a bottle attached to their cage. Hamsters hoard food for survival. This means they store food in their burrows.	Hamsters like to dig, so their cages need to be large, with the bottom filled with materials like dust-free wood shavings. Hamsters are nocturnal which means they wake at night and need to sleep in peace, during the day.

Hamsters typically live for 2 years. They are quite a responsibility and need to be cared for appropriately.

Did you know ...?



They have large eyes to help them see in darker places.

Their incisor teeth never stop growing! They self-sharpen when a hamster is gnawing food or objects.

Hamster behaviour

Hamsters like to explore, so they need cardboard tubes, wooden chew blocks, small boxes and a hamster wheel, to keep them busy.

Their whiskers help them explore the world, as they use them to 'see' objects.

They have very well-developed senses to warn them of animals that might eat them, so hamsters are nervous and easily scared.

Dangers to hamsters

- Grapes and rhubarb are poisonous to hamsters.
- If you let them out of their cage, make sure no other pets are around, and that the hamster is watched until it is back in the cage. They can chew wires and other materials which can make them very ill and sometimes kill them.



Questions

1. What do hamsters eat and drink?

2. Why do you think hamsters store food in their burrows?

3. What do hamster cages need to be like?

4. How are hamsters different to people when thinking about when they are awake and asleep?

5. How long do hamsters usually live?

6. What part of a hamster carries on growing?

7. Why do hamsters have “well-developed senses”?

8. Should hamsters be given grapes? Explain why.

9. What might happen if a hamster is out of its cage and not watched carefully?

Answers

1. What do hamsters eat and drink?

Hamsters eat food pellets or a mix of seeds and nuts, and drinks clean, fresh water.

2. Why do you think hamsters store food in their burrows?

I think hamsters store food to save for later/ to survive.

3. What do hamster cages need to be like?

Hamster cages need to be large with the bottom filled with dust-free wood shavings.

4. How are hamsters different to people when thinking about when they are awake and asleep?

Hamsters are different to people because they wake up at night and sleep in the day, and people sleep at night and wake up in the day.

5. How long do hamsters usually live?

Hamsters usually live for two years.

6. What part of a hamster carries on growing?

The hamster's incisor teeth carry on growing.

7. Why do hamsters have "well-developed senses"?

Hamsters have "well developed senses" to warn them of animals that might want to eat them.

8. Should hamsters be given grapes? Explain why.

Hamsters should not be given grapes because they are poisonous to them.

9. What might happen if a hamster is out of its cage and not watched carefully?

If a hamster is out of its cage and not watched carefully, it could chew through wires, which could kill it.

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Hamsters are a member of the rodent family, along with rats, mice, gerbils and chinchillas.

What do we know about these little mammals?

Diet	Environment
Hamsters need pelleted foods, or a mix of different seeds and nuts. Food must be changed regularly, as if it becomes stale or mouldy, hamsters can get very ill. They must always have fresh, clean water, which they can reach from a bottle attached to their cage. Hamsters hoard food as a survival technique. They can store food in their cheek pouches, up to half their body weight!	In the wild, hamsters live in dry, rocky plains and nest underground in burrows. As they like to dig, their cages need to be large, with the bottom filled with litter materials, like dust-free wood shavings are a good choice. These shavings mean hamsters can still dig. Hamsters are nocturnal, so they need to be able to exercise at night and sleep, without disturbances, during the day.

Hamsters typically live for 2 years. They are quite a responsibility and need to be cared for appropriately.

Did you know ...?



Hamsters can be trained to do simple tricks!

Smell is a useful sense which hamsters use for social communication.

Their incisor teeth never stop growing! They self-sharpen when a hamster is gnawing food or objects.

Hamster behaviour

Hamsters like to explore, so they need cardboard tubes, a wooden chew block, small boxes and a hamster wheel, to keep them busy and healthy. Their whiskers help them explore the world, and they use them to detect objects.

They are prey animals so have very well developed senses to warn them of predators, and are nervous and easily afraid.

Dangers to hamsters

Hamsters need to be kept safe. Keep these tips in mind:

- Grapes and rhubarb are poisonous to hamsters.
- They can catch a human cold, and infect people with the cold virus.
- They need to be away from objects which transmit ultrasound, like TVs, computers and vacuums.
- If you let them out of their cage, make sure no other pets are around, and that the hamster is supervised until it is returned to the cage. They can chew wires and other materials which can make them very ill and affect their breathing.



Questions

1. Name two other members of the family which hamsters are part of.

2. Explain why food needs changing regularly.

3. Why do hamsters need a certain type of bedding or cage material?

4. Would a hamster be a good pet for someone who is at home all day and wants company?
Explain your thoughts.

5. Which of the 'Did you know...?' facts do you find most interesting, and why?

6. Identify three items an owner could put in the hamster cage to keep them busy.

7. What would happen if a hamster had their whiskers trimmed?

8. What does "they are prey animals" mean?

Questions

9. Why do hamsters who are out of their cage, need to be 'supervised' until they are back in their cage? Give an example of what could happen.

10. Would you want a hamster? Explain your thoughts.

1. Name two other members of the family which hamsters are part of.
Two other members of the rodent family which hamsters are part of are: rats, gerbils, mice, chinchillas. (Accept any two.)
2. Explain why food needs changing regularly.
The food needs regularly changing because if it becomes stale or mouldy, the hamster can get ill.
3. Why do hamsters need a certain type of bedding or cage material?
Hamsters need a certain type of bedding or cage material because they need to be able to dig; in the wild they live underground in burrows.
4. Would a hamster be a good pet for someone who is at home all day and wants company? Explain your thoughts.
I don't think a hamster would be a good pet for someone who wants company during the day, because they are a nocturnal animal so sleep all day and wake up at night.
5. Which of the 'Did you know...?' facts do you find most interesting, and why?
Pupil's own response.
6. Identify three items an owner could put in the hamster cage to keep them busy.
Three items an owner could put in the hamster cage to keep them busy are: cardboard tubes, a wooden chew block, small boxes and a hamster wheel. (Accept any three).
7. What would happen if a hamster had their whiskers trimmed?
If a hamster had their whiskers trimmed, it would not be able to detect objects near to them and they might bump into things.
8. What does "they are prey animals" mean?
"Prey animals" means that other animals eat hamsters, and that they have instincts to help against being hunted.
9. Why do hamsters who are out of their cage, need to be 'supervised' until they are back in their cage? Give an example of what could happen.
Hamsters which are out of their cage need to be supervised because there are many dangers to them. Pupil's own example.
10. Would you want a hamster? Explain your thoughts.
Pupil's own response.

Pet Care of a Hamster



Hamsters are a member of the rodent family. Though they prove to be popular pets, hamsters are not a native to the UK. One popular type of domestic hamster was bred from a single pair, brought over in 1930 from Aleppo in Syria, by Israel Aharoni.

So what do we know about these little mammals?

Diet	Environment
Domestic hamsters need compound pelleted foods, or a mix of different seeds and nuts. In the wild, they would eat a range of food, including crickets! Food must be changed regularly, as if it becomes stale or mouldy, hamsters can become very ill. They must always have fresh, clean water, which they can reach from a bottle attached to their cage.	In the wild, they live in dry, rocky plains and nest underground in burrows. This digging instinct is present in domestic hamsters, so cages need to be large, with a plastic base which can be filled with suitable litter materials, so that they can dig. Dust-free wood shavings are a good choice, providing they are free from preservatives and chemicals, to avoid illness.

Hamsters typically live for 2 years. They are quite a commitment, and owners must care for them properly, according to the Animal Welfare Act.

Did you know ...?

Hamsters hoard food as a survival technique. They can store food in their cheek pouches, equivalent to half their body weight!

Hamsters are nocturnal, so they need to be able to exercise at night and sleep, without disturbances, during the day. They have large eyes to function properly in dimly lit areas.

Their incisor teeth never stop growing! They self-sharpen when a hamster is gnawing food or objects, which grinds the teeth down.

Did you know ...?

Hamster behaviour

Their whiskers are vital in their exploration of the world, as they detect objects around them. Their whiskers vibrate backwards and forwards at a rate of 30 whisks per second!

Hamsters like to explore, so they need cardboard tubes, wooden chew blocks, small boxes and a hamster wheel, to keep them busy and healthy.

They have very well-developed senses to warn them of predators, and are nervous and easily stressed.

Dangers to hamsters

Hamsters are small, vulnerable creatures and need to be kept safe. Here are some factors which need to be considered.

- Grapes and rhubarb are poisonous to hamsters.
- They can catch a human cold, and infect people with the cold virus.
- They need to be housed away from objects which transmit ultrasound. For example, TVs, computers and vacuums.
- If you let them out of their cage, make sure no other pets are around, and that the hamster is supervised continually, until it is returned to the cage. They can chew wires and other materials which can make them very ill and affect their breathing.



Questions

1. From where did some domestic hamsters originate from and who was responsible for their breeding?

2. Explain the feeding requirements of hamsters, in three points.

3. Describe what sort of cage and materials hamsters need, and the reasons behind the type required.

4. Explain what “hamsters hoard food as a survival technique” means.

5. Are hamsters well-suited to being nocturnal? How do you know?

6. What is the paragraph in italics about?

7. Imagine you are a vet. A hamster owner has brought their pet in saying that the hamster keeps bumping into things. What would you look for and why?

Questions

8. What word or phrase could have been used instead of 'vulnerable'?

9. With reference to the information about the nature of hamsters, why do you think all other pets must be kept away if a hamster is let out of its cage?

10. Which fact has interested or surprised you the most?

Answers

1. From where did some domestic hamsters originate from and who was responsible for their breeding?

The domestic hamster originated in Syria. Israel Aharoni was responsible for their breeding.

2. Explain the feeding requirements of hamsters, in three points.

1. Hamsters need pelleted food with a mix of seeds and nuts.

2. Food must not get stale or mouldy.

3. There must always be clean, fresh water available for them.

3. Describe what sort of cage and materials hamsters need, and the reasons behind the type required.

Hamsters need large cages with a plastic base, filled with materials which the hamsters can dig. Dust-free wood shavings need to be used, which are free from preservatives and chemicals, or else the hamster could become ill.

4. Explain what “hamsters hoard food as a survival technique” means.

“Hamsters hoard food as a survival technique” means that they collect food to make sure they have enough to survive if it runs out.

5. Are hamsters well-suited to being nocturnal? How do you know?

Hamsters are well-suited to being nocturnal because they have large eyes to help them function better in darker areas.

6. What is the paragraph in italics about?

The paragraph in italics is about how to keep the hamster entertained and healthy.

7. Imagine you are a vet. A hamster owner has brought their pet in saying that the hamster keeps bumping into things. What would you look for and why?

If I were a vet and someone brought a hamster in which was bumping into things, I would look at how long their whiskers are, because their whiskers help them locate/ identify/ find objects around them.

8. What word or phrase could have been used instead of ‘vulnerable’?

A word or phrase which could have been used instead of vulnerable, is “in danger of being harmed”/ “unsafe”/ “needs to be protected”.

Answers

9. With reference to the information about the nature of hamsters, why do you think all other pets must be kept away if a hamster is let out of its cage?

Pupil's own response, based on hamsters being nervous and easily stressed.

10. Which fact has interested or surprised you the most?

Pupil's own response.