

## Housing (Toys & Enrichment) continued...

...and whimzeez are all great options.

Sand baths are also a pretty big deal with hamsters. They absolutely love them, and not only will they “bathe” in the sand, but they can also be potty trained and will use the sand as a litter box. It’s a win-win! You can use chinchilla sand (not dust) or purchase children’s play sand and bake it in the oven to dry it. Reptisand and aquarium sands can also be used so long as they have no additives.

### Cage Cleaning

Cleaning a hamster’s cage is very stressful for them. Depending on the size of the cage, it should only need to be changed every 2 weeks- 1 months, with spot cleaning being done every 1-2 days in the soiled corners or sand boxes. When you do clean the cage, a partial clean is recommended, only replacing half of the bedding in the cage at a time. Removing all of the bedding with their scent is unsettling and can lead to stress.

### Summary

Hamsters can make fabulous pets for young (with supervision) and old alike. Given time and patience, they can easily become a great friend to you or your child. Though the average lifespan is 2-3 years, they can make a huge impact! They are fun and full of personality and are sure to put a smile on anyone’s face. Also, please never hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.



# Winterbell Hamstery's HAMSTER CARE GUIDE



Breeding quality Syrian & Dwarf hamsters in  
Knoxville, Tennessee

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## Coming Home

Bringing home your new hamster can be super exciting and stressful all at the same time. You want to make sure you have everything set up and be sure you have everything your new friend needs ready to go so they can relax with minimal interruptions the first few days, as this transition period can be very scary for the hamster. They are in a new home, with new smells new sounds, and without their siblings so they are nervous. Once you bring them home, it is recommended to put them in their new cage and leave them alone to acclimate to their new surroundings for a few days. This usually takes 2 days to a week. You can talk to the hamster and place treats in the cage, but interactions should be minimal. See the below section on handling for more information on getting your new ham used to you!

## Handling

First and foremost, never pick up a sleeping hamster.

When it comes to handling your new hamster, patience is key. Once your hamster is awake, place your hand in the cage, palm up to give your hamster the opportunity to sniff and explore your hand. You can also place treats in your hand so the hamster associates you with a positive experience. They enjoy seeds, nuts, and baby treats!

Once your hamster has become accustomed to your hands, you can scoop them out of the cage and sit on or in a solid enclosed place, like a bathtub, bathroom with door shut, or in a kiddie swimming pool so your hamster can climb all over you to further acclimate to your scent and touch. This is always a super fun way to socialize, especially for children.



## Feeding

At Winterbell, the hamsters are currently fed a staple diet of Mazuri 5663 with a seed mix sprinkled throughout the cage a few times a week for foraging and enrichment. You will be sent home with a sample of your hamster's current block food to help transition. On day 1, you'll start with the food you've been sent home with, and then you can gradually increase the percentage of your food of choice day by day until you are completely switched over. While it is recommended that you stick with the same food, or one similar, sometimes that is not possible, so I am happy to help guide you towards other suitable options.



## Housing

The bigger the better is what's usually said! Hamsters love having room to run, roam, and explore. It is recommended to have a cage with a minimum, 450 sq. inches of unbroken floor space. There are numerous cage options, but not all are created equally, and most store bought cages are not adequate. Some of the better and more common options are modified storage bins, aquariums, Prevue 528, and the Critter trail Super Habitat.

When it comes to decor, there are a few basics;

## Bedding/nesting-

Hamsters love to dig and burrow, so they love having several inches to dig and burrow to their heart's content. Carefresh (or similar paper based beddings), aspen, and kiln dried pine are all suitable choices. As far as nesting materials are concerned, you will want to avoid any of the cotton type products sold in pet stores. They can cause internal blockage if ingested and amputation if tangled around a limb. They love shredded tissue, toilet paper, and paper gift crinkles.

## Hides-

Hamsters love to have a place to hide and sleep. You'll want to have at least a few different options in the cage. Igloos are popular choice, as well as many wooden hides, and ceramic hides found online or in big box stores. You can also repurpose old boxes (pop-tart, cereal, tissue, etc.)

## Wheels-

Depending on species, hamsters require a solid wheel anywhere from 6-12 inches in diameter. Comfort wheel, Wodent Wheels, Silent Runners, and Niteangel wheels are all good options. Saucers can be used in addition to, but not instead of a regular wheel.

## Bowls/Water bottles-

Food bowls are not a requirement, as the hamster will often move the food to a place of their choosing, but you can certainly use them if you desire. If you do, you'll want to choose a sturdy ceramic bowl, as lightweight ones have been known to tip over and trap their furry owners. As far as water bottles go, there are many options. You'll just want to make sure it doesn't leak or get stopped up.

## Toys/enrichment-

Hamsters love to play. They love to have things to climb and run all over and through. Ropes, ladders, bridges, toilet paper and paper towel tubes, popsicle stick structures, boxes, and many bird toys often, make fantastic enrichment option. The sky is the limit. The more they have and the more clutter, the better. They also like to be provided with various chews as well;

loofah chews, wooden chews, (go to next pg)