

Roger's Aquatics & Pet Supplies: Dwarf Hamsters

Dwarf hamsters are one of the smallest rodents available in the pet trade. There are many different kinds of dwarf hamsters, but typically the Russian dwarf hamsters, also known as a Djungarian dwarf hamster, are the most commonly available. The second and possibly most popular are the Roborovski hamsters, or Robo hamsters which are even smaller than Russian dwarfs. Like many rodents, they are short lived, with only an average of a two year lifespan, and are nocturnal.

Enclosure: Size, Bedding, and Accessories

The more space that can be provided, the better, as these hamsters are very active at night. A 2 foot by 18 inch floor space is ideal, with at least 12 – 18 inches of height.

Bedding provides a way for hamsters to show natural foraging and burrowing behaviour, as well as absorbs urine. Paper based beddings (such as Uber or Fresh N' Comfy) are the best. Aspen shavings also makes a good bedding. Some hamsters can be reactive to pine shavings, and cedar shavings should never be used as it is toxic to rodents.

Accessories are very important – chew toys will help keep teeth down, prevent boredom, and prevent the hamster from biting the bars of the cage, which they can break their teeth on. A wheel is also very important – dwarf hamsters need to release pent up energy, and the exercise will help keep them trim. Reorganizing the enclosure and switching out toys every so often will also help with boredom.

Diet

A table spoon of food per day should be plenty for a single dwarf hamster. A specialty hamster diet should be chosen, as it is formulated for their specific needs. A small bowl is typically the best way to offer food. The bowl should be heavy enough that the hamster does not tip it and waste the food.

Fresh veggies can be offered once or twice a week. Fruits should be fed sparingly or avoided all together, since dwarf hamsters are prone to diabetes. Too much food that's high in water content can cause diarrhea. Protein can also be added to their diet. Dwarf hamsters will particularly enjoy live worms.

Fresh snacks include:

Apples (seedless)	Bok Choy	Spinach
Bananas	Endive	Squash
Raspberries	Kale	Swiss Chard
Strawberries	Romaine	

Protein sources include:

Crickets	Boiled eggs	Steamed or baked chicken
Mealworms	Plain low fat yogurt	Steam or baked turkey
Small superworms	Low fat cottage cheese	



Hygiene

The hamster cage should be cleaned once a week to maintain a healthy environment. The hamster can also be potty trained, which will help keep the cage clean and make managing the smell of the hamster easier, as the litter box can be dumped out daily. When cleaning, the cage accessories should be cleaned as well. A hamster should never be bathed. To help keep their fur clean, a sand bath can be provided in a rounded bowl or container that is easy for the hamster to access.

Playtime

Most hamsters will tolerate short periods of handling. To pick up the hamster, scoop them up with both hands from underneath. Be careful when approaching the hamster, as they can easily startle – a startled hamster may bite as they are frightened and have no other means of defence. Once they are out of the cage, keep them in quiet room, with no cats or dogs, which may frighten them. Always hold the hamster close to the ground or your lap, as they can easily injure themselves during a fall.

Cohabitation

Dwarf hamsters naturally live in groups in the wild, and can usually be kept in groups in captivity. Groups should always be of the same sex, to avoid breeding. The hamsters should be introduced at a young age, as older hamsters that have been kept alone for a while may not be as tolerant of friends. A larger cage with additional housing should be used to ensure that the hamsters have enough space. Two wheels should be made available as well.

Checklist of Supplies

- ✓ Cage
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Exercise wheel
- ✓ Bedding
- ✓ Food mix
- ✓ Food dish
- ✓ House
- ✓ Chew toys
- ✓ Litter box
- ✓ Dust bath