

# Dwarf Siberian Hamster

*Phodopus spp.*



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Dwarf hamsters have a high level of energy. An average hamster exercises for 3 to 4 hours a night! They are clean and captivating companion animals. Hamsters are known as hoarders because they have cheek pouches they use to store and move food from one place to another.



### Is a dwarf hamster the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

- I have an appropriate location and space for a hamster.
- I know that male and female hamsters should not be housed together.
- I will provide daily, supervised time for this hamster outside the habitat.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this hamster.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered, "Yes" to these statements, a dwarf hamster may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a dwarf hamster and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

**Average Size** 3 to 4 inches long **Life Span** 2 - 3 years with proper care

**Diet** High-quality hamster food; small amounts of grains, vegetables, fruits and timothy hay  
 Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake  
 Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily  
 Do not feed chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical problems

**Feeding** Fresh food and water should always be available  
 Small amounts of grains, vegetables, fruits, or timothy hay can be given daily  
 Vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded

**Housing** Hamsters acclimate well to average household temperatures; be cautious of extreme temperature changes; habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area  
 Habitat should be glass, plastic or metal, escape-proof with 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 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes hardwood shavings or pelleted or recycled products; cedar bedding may cause harm and is not recommended

House adult hamsters separately

### Recommended Supplies

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriately sized cage  | <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl         | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping house  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle      | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise toys   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-quality hamster food | <input type="checkbox"/> Vitamins          | <input type="checkbox"/> Wooden half-log |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about dwarf hamsters | <input type="checkbox"/> Ladders and ramps | <input type="checkbox"/> Chew stick      |

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### Normal Behavior and Interaction

Active during the night and sleep during the day (nocturnal)  
Easy to handle but may nip if suddenly awakened from a nap or startled  
Chews on objects to maintain incisor teeth, which grow continuously; ensure have plenty of chew sticks available  
Never house more than one adult hamster per habitat

### Habitat Maintenance

Remove wet spots daily; change bedding weekly or more often, if necessary  
Clean the habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and allow to dry completely before placing hamster back into the habitat

### Grooming and Hygiene

Stays clean and rarely need baths; can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipes, if necessary  
Consult with a veterinarian if a hamster's teeth or nails seem too long  
Because all hamsters are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your hamster and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.  
Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a hamster and should consider not having a hamster as a pet. For more information regarding hamsters and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at <http://www.petco.com/pet care info/companion animal care sheets>.

### Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Active, alert, and sociable
  - Eats and drinks regularly
  - Healthy, clean fur and clear eyes
  - Clear breathing and walks normally
- It is normal for a hamster's teeth to be yellow; cleaning is not necessary

### Common Health Issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Diabetes	Frequent urination and lethargy.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.
Diarrhea	Loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to determine cause and treatment
Malocclusion	Overgrown teeth.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to possibly have teeth trimmed regularly.
Mites	External parasite that causes hamsters to lose patches of hair.	Contact an exotic animal veterinarian for treatment.

### Red Flags

- Weight loss
- Abnormal hair loss
- Diarrhea or dirty bottom
- Distressed breathing
- Lethargic
- Eye or nasal discharge
- Skin lesions
- Overgrown teeth

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

### Sources

*Choosing a Small Mammal* by Dennis Kelsey-Wood  
*Hamsters as a New Pet* by Anmarie Barrie  
*The ASPCA Complete Guide to Pet Care* by David L. Carroll

**Note:** The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.