



Nibbles Rodent &
Rabbit Rescue

www.nibbles.org.uk

Reg Charity No.
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Our Guide to



Dwarf Hamsters

What's Awesome About Dwarf Hamsters

There are four different species of dwarf hamsters kept as domestic pets. Roborovskis are the smallest at a teeny 4-5m in length. Campbells & Winter Whites are very similar, so much so, that many people do not even realise they are separate species. They can interbreed, but this leads to sterile offspring, and there are many hybrids found in pet shops. Lastly there are Chinese hamsters, which are the largest and have longer tails, compared to a syrian.



Roborovski



Campbells



Winter White



Chinese

Things to Think About

Dwarf hamsters are incredibly cute, but many are not a fan of being handled and are very fast, this is especially true of Roborovskis. This makes them unsuitable for young children to handle and even in some cases adults. They are more suitable for those who wish to watch them, rather than a pet they can handle.

They are also completely nocturnal and generally wake at dusk and are tucked up in bed shortly before dawn. If kept in bedrooms, they can keep their human companions awake or disturb sleep as they scamper about and run in wheels.

Their small size can make it difficult to find suitable cages and they can squeeze out between the bars if they are over 8mm and 5mm for a very small Roborovski. Despite their small size they still require a large cage.

Of all the common domestic rodent species they have a relatively short life-span of between 18 months to 2 years, although some individuals easily reach 3 years.



Diet

Dwarf hamsters are prone to diabetes as they are unable to process large amount of sugar. It is important to provide a low sugar diet, including naturally occurring sugars found in fruits and some veg, such as carrots



A commercial mix containing seeds and grains is the best choice, but these can be hard to find. The next best option is a mix like Harry Hamster.

You can add to this mix which additional seeds, grains, dried flowers and dried insects such as meal worms.



For a bit of variety you can offer dried forage and flowers, such as marigolds. You can also give a single pea one a week.

Enrichment



Hamsters need plenty of enrichment to keep their minds and bodies active.

Providing them with items to climb on, over, and under are all appreciated. A suitable exercise wheel is also important.

Many wheels are far too small for an adult hamster and causes their backs to bend while running. This can lead to long-term spinal damage. Wheels need to be solid and at least 20cm in diameter.

A dust bath is also appreciated by hamsters and helps to keep their coats in good condition.

Providing a small dish with chinchilla dust is a great addition. Hamster exercise balls should not be used, as they cause undue stress. Why not try an exercise pen instead.



Housing



Despite their small size, dwarf hamsters are incredibly active and require a spacious home. Keeping them in small cages quickly leads to boredom, stress and depression. They require a

minimum continuous floor space of at least 75cm x 50cm, ideally up to 100cm x 50cm. Good option for dwarves is a converted 3ft x 1ft fishtank as this prevents possible escapes by squeezing through bars.

Other Important Things



Bar Biting - It is a myth that hamsters bite the bars of their cages to file their teeth down. This is actually a stereotypical stress behaviour, similar to zoo animals pacing or rocking, and indicates that the hamster requires more space.

Company - Dwarf hamsters are often sold in pairs, but this actually isn't the best idea.

Although they tend to live in colonies in the wild, this is more out of necessity than desire.

They leave the burrows at night and forage for food alone. In a captive environment, they are unable to escape each other and this can, and does, lead to serious fighting and the need to be separated. They are best off kept as singles.



Vet Care - Hamsters are classed as exotics within the veterinary industry and therefore owners need to carefully select a suitable vet able to treat them. We recommend Origin Vets for West Wales and Origin Vets Clinic for South Wales.