



## HAMSTER CARE GUIDE: HEALTH

### GENERAL INFO

**Annual Exam:** It is important to take your hamster to the veterinarian for an annual exam to ensure your hamster is in good health. Hamsters do not require vaccines.

### GENERAL SIGNS OF ILLNESS

- Any behavioral change
- Lethargy
- Defensive aggression
- Disinterested in treats
- Changes in eating or drinking
- Disinterested in interacting with you
- Poor coat quality

**Lifespan:** Two to three years.

**Reproduction:** Hamsters become sexually mature and are able to reproduce from three to six weeks of age.

**Species:** There are two main types of hamsters: Syrian hamsters (six–seven inches long) and dwarf hamsters (three–five inches long). There are several different species of dwarf hamsters including Campbell's, Roborovskis, Winter Whites, and Chinese.

### COMMON ISSUES

\* *Hamsters are known for trying to hide their illnesses. Signs and symptoms are something you must watch for closely. If you see evidence of an illness, get your hamster to a veterinarian for treatment as soon as possible.*

#### Upper Respiratory Infection

Signs of URI include sneezing, labored breathing, chattering, sniffing, eye or nose discharge, lethargy, weight loss, and lack of appetite.

#### Wet Tail

One of the most common and well know hamster illnesses is wet tail. This is thought to be caused by an overgrowth of bacteria. Your pet can become susceptible when it is stressed, particularly when moving to a new environment. Symptoms include diarrhea, a wet tail/hind end, lethargy, foul odor, hunching, and aggression. If you believe your hamster has wet tail, bring it to the veterinarian immediately as this illness is life threatening and your pet will need antibiotics and possibly fluids. Not all diarrhea is caused by wet tail, sometimes it can be caused by a change in diet or from foods with high water content.



Dwarf Hamster

Syrian Hamster

#### Hibernation

Hamsters can go into hibernation if the temperature drops below 60 degrees Fahrenheit. This is very dangerous for your pet. Try to maintain a temperature of between 65–75 degrees Fahrenheit. If you notice that your hamster is not moving, feels cold and limp, and is breathing shallowly, he may be beginning to hibernate. Many people initially think that their hibernating hamster is actually dead. You must warm your pet up by placing them under a heat lamp, on a heating pad, or hot water bottle. You will also need to work on waking your hamster up by rubbing them. Once your pet is awake, offer water with a dropper as you need to help them rehydrate.