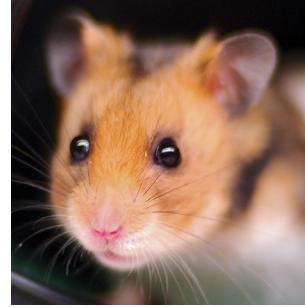


Hamster

Natural history

Hamsters are short, stocky rodents with lots of loose skin. The pet/ laboratory hamster known as the Syrian hamster was bred from a small group of hamsters dug out a burrow near Syria in 1930 as well as 11 more collected in 1971 and 3 in 1978 .



Taxonomy

Class Mammalia

Order Rodentia

Suborder Myomorpha

Family Cricetidae

Hamsters belong to the same taxonomic family as gerbils and mice.

Species/breeds

The **Syrian hamster** is also known as the Golden hamster because the colony were reddish-gold, however many varieties exist today. **Dwarf hamsters** may also be seen in practice.

Diet

Hamsters can do very well on a commercial rodent chow (24% protein) supplemented with vegetables and a small amount of fruit. Hamsters fed seed-based diets are very sensitive to vitamin E deficiency.

Housing

Hamsters are nocturnal. As desert animals, the Syrian hamster instinctively burrows and hoards food. Adult Syrian and Chinese hamsters are fiercely territorial and should be housed singly.

Winter white Russian and Russian Campbell hamsters are social, however it is still ill advised to introduce new individuals to a group.

Hamsters can enter torpor if temperatures fall below 41°F (5°C), particularly when exposed to short days.

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Housing

Normal physiologic values of Syrian hamsters

Temperature	97-102.3°F	36.1-38.9°C
Pulse	250-500 bpm	
Respiration	34-114	
Adult male	85-110	
Adult female	95-130 g	

Hamster

Mean life span	2-3y	maximum 4y	18-36 months
Sexual maturity	6-8 weeks	6 wks (F) 8 wks (M)	For optimal breeding, males should be 10-12 weeks old and females 8-10 weeks
Target environmental temperature: 50-68°F 20-24°C			
Relative humidity 40-60%			
Gestation	15-18 days		
Birth weight	2-3 g		
Litter size	4 to 12	maximum 17	
Weaning	3-4 weeks		
Water intake	9-12 ml/day		

Russian hamsters live 1.5-2 years.

Anatomy/ Physiology Facts

GI	1. Incisors become yellow with age due to iron pigments. 2. Distensible cheek pouches extend back to the shoulders 3. Non-glandular forestomach and a glandular stomach
Derm	Sebaceous flank glands are present in both genders, but are better developed with darker pigmentation in males. better developed in males
Renal	Syrian hamster urine is normally creamy and turbid.
Reproductive	Females pass a thick, creamy white post-ovulatory discharge. Each uterine horn opens into a separate cervix.
Physiology	Syrian hamsters will hibernate if kept in a cool area with limited food. Syrian hamsters possess renal and respiratory water conservation mechanisms, however unlike some desert rodents they cannot survive on metabolic water

Restraint

Syrian hamsters tend to bite, especially when awakened from a deep sleep or put through excessive or prolonged restraint.
To pick up, cup hamsters in both hands. To restrain, grasp the loose skin over the thorax.
Roborovskii hamsters are gentle and docile, but very fast.

Important medical conditions

Adrenocortical hyperplasia and adenomas
Cheek pouch impaction
Ocular proptosis
Proliferative ileitis or "wet tail"

Venipuncture

Venipuncture is challenging in the hamster. The jugular and saphenous veins may be tried. The Syrian hamster has a rapid coagulation time so it may help

to heparinize needles.

Hamster

References and further reading

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