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## Home Care for Hamsters

### Food and Water

- A commercial pelleted diet or rodent block should be offered free choice. Avoid diets with seeds and dried fruit in the mix, as they are high in fat and sugars, but low in protein, calcium, and vitamin E.
  - Oxbow Hamster and Gerbil diet is a balanced high quality diet option
- Healthy treat options include: fresh vegetables or fruit, unsweetened cereal, hay (timothy or orchard grass),
- Fresh water should always be available in a bottle or spill-proof bowl and changed daily.

### Housing

- Cages should open wire bar sides and have a flat bottom (no wire) to prevent foot injuries. Aquarium or tank style cages should be avoided due to poor air circulation.
  - Cage bars must be close enough together so that the hamster can not escape
- Bedding should be paper pulp (such as Carefresh) or shredded paper. Wood chips/shavings are not recommended because they can cause eye and airway irritation.
- Hamsters should be housed individually. Most species will fight when housed together.
- Hamsters may enter torpor (similar to hibernation) if temperatures drop below 40°F

### Enrichment

- Toys that Hamsters can use to hide or burrow in are very popular; options include boxes, paper bags, shredded paper, and tubes
- A running wheel should be provided for exercise

### Handling

Always use two hands to pick up your hamster. Many hamsters tend to bite when startled.

*If your hamster is exhibiting decreased appetite, diarrhea, lethargy, hair loss, or any other concerning changes in behavior, contact a veterinarian to schedule an evaluation as soon as possible.*