



## Introduction Guide To The Care Of

### Syrian Hamsters

**Scientific Name:** Mesocricetus auratus

**Life Span:** Approx 2-3 years in captivity

**Size:** 5 to 7 inches (13 to 18 cm)

**Appearance:** Hamsters have expandable cheek pouches, which extend from its cheeks to its shoulders. In the wild, hamsters are larger hoarders; they use their cheek pouches to transport food to their burrows. The Syrian Hamster is generally about 5 ½ inches (13 cm) in length, although some can be little larger. Females are often larger than the males. They are stocky animals with large eyes, tulip shaped ears, and a very short tail. The Syrian hamster is sometimes known as “the Golden Hamster”. The original wild colour of the Syrian hamster is golden brown ticked with black on the upper two-thirds of the body. The belly fur is white with a grey undercoat. They also possess black cheek flashes and cheek-pouches that can carry a large amount of food to store back in their burrows. In the wild and in captivity they are fiercely territorial and will attack any other hamster that ventures into their space. In the wild the female will only tolerate the male briefly for mating. She will attack him at all other times. In the wild and in captivity Syrian hamsters are solitary animals and must be housed on their own. Syrian hamsters are bred in four different coat types – Shorthaired, Longhaired, Satin and Rex.

**Temperament and Handling:** DAY 1: Your new pet will be very nervous when first introduced to its new cage. Therefore leave it at least 1 day to settle in before trying to handle it. DAY 2: Earn your hamsters trust by talking to it and offering it food/treats. Once your hamster is used to you, gently scoop it up with both hands and take it out of its cage. Never reach down suddenly to pick a hamster up as this will startle it and it will probably bite! They are very territorial creatures and often only like being handled outside of their cage. Baby hamsters are extremely fast and sometimes nip. Therefore an adult should supervise young children when handling their new pet. It is best to get someone who is unafraid to handle the hamster at first. Nervous people perspire and hamsters will detect this and may act aggressively towards you. Your hamster will curl its ears back when angry or annoyed. Hamsters can catch colds from humans, so never handle your hamster when suffering from a cold. Remember-the more time you spend handling your hamster, the friendlier and more enjoyable a pet it will become!

**Housing:** Syrian hamsters can be territorial and should be housed alone. They should be housed in as larger cage as possible to prevent boredom. Toys such as hamster seesaws and play blocks help to keep them entertained. The cage should contain a wheel on which it will run up to 8 miles a night! A play ball will also provide the hamster with extra exercise and entertainment, as they will love to

explore your home. Play balls are also a great place to put your hamster whilst cleaning out its cage. The cage should be placed in a draft free area away from direct sunlight. Spread a thin layer of sawdust on the cage floor to absorb urine. Then fill the house with bedding for the hamster to sleep in. Fresh water should be provided in a water bottle attached to the outside of the cage. This should be changed on a daily basis. Syrian hamsters are naturally curious and will always try to escape. So make sure the cage door is shut securely. Inspect the cage on a regular basis for effects of gnawing. Hamsters are clean animals and will usually go to toilet in one area of the cage. They can also be trained to use hamster toilets; this reduces the amount of cage cleaning required. The entire cage should be cleaned on a weekly basis using small animal cage disinfectant. Do not use household disinfectants as these may contain chemicals that are harmful to hamsters.

**Heating and Lighting:** (see above)

**Feeding:** Feed your hamster once a day with standard hamster mix. They also love occasional treats such as rotastak choc/milk drops, popcorn/honey/nut. stickle treats and small amounts of fruit/vegetables (no citrus fruit). A salt lick and mineral block should also be provided. Hamster's teeth grow continuously. They may overgrow and require veterinary treatment if the hamster is not provided with wooden hamster gnaws or allowed to chew the bars of its cage.

**Please note that this is only an introductory guide based on our opinions and experience, we advise you to continually research and learn as much as possible from as many sources as you can, every animal is different and new care and information is always being developed and found 😊**