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HAMSTERS

General Information:

The most common hamster species kept as a pet is the golden or Syrian hamster. Other species include the Chinese and Siberian hamster. The golden hamster originates from the Middle East where their existence is being threatened by owl predators and destruction of territory. They can weigh 80-150 g and have a life expectancy of 1.5-2 years. Hamsters are nocturnal animals who adapt well to captivity and with frequent, gentle handling can easily become tame. They may show aggression and bite due to rough handling, sudden disturbances, being around other hamsters, or ill or in pain. A small cloth may be used when handling your hamster to prevent being bitten.

Diet:

Hamsters have cheek pouches which are used to store and transport their food to their burrow. Hamsters have four incisor teeth which grow throughout life so it's important to provide a good diet and safe items for them to chew on. Hamsters should be fed commercial pellets made for small rodents. Treats can include tiny bits of seedless and skinless apples, carrots, raisins, and walnuts. Drinking water should be provided via sipper tubes that need to be changed daily.

Housing:

Hamster cages should have a secure lid with have at least 150 square inches of floor space with a height of 6-10 inches and made with glass or strong metal. Cages should be placed out of direct sunlight and kept at 65-71 degrees F. Paper based bedding such as CareFresh is preferred over wood based bedding. Bedding should be changed weekly to reduce odors.

Health:

Hamsters should be examined on a regular basis by a veterinarian. Signs of a healthy hamster include normal scent glands, discharge free nose and eyes, bright shiny eyes, hair coat in good condition, and nails and teeth are not over grown. Hamsters should be taken to a veterinarian if it is showing signs of weight loss, hair loss, diarrhea, abnormal breathing, lethargy, eye or nose discharge, skin lesions, and overgrown teeth.