



Practice Limited to Birds, Reptiles and Exotics

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AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES
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Gerbil & Hamster Health Care

Hamsters are known as hoarders because they have cheek pouches that they use to store and move food from one place to another. These companion animals are best housed individually. **Hamster average size** is 4 to 5 inches long.

Life Span: 2 – 3 years with proper care.

Gerbils are very social animals. They love to play in tubes and boxes. Do not pick them up by the tail as the skin can slip off if held too tightly. **Gerbil average size** is 4 to 5 inches long. **Life Span:** up to 5 years with proper care.

Different types of animals should not be housed together

Diet requirements : High quality rodent food (**Healthy Handfuls by OXBOW**) should be supplied daily. You can offer small amounts of grains, vegetables, fruits, and timothy hay***. Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake. Provide clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water. Changed daily. Do not feed chocolate, alcohol or caffeine as these can cause serious medical problems. *** **Fresh Food and Water should be available at all times*****

Housing requirements: Habitat should be glass, wire or metal. Provide the largest habitat possible because plenty of room is needed for exercise and play. Make sure the habitat is escape proof and has a solid top / bottom. Both hamsters and gerbils can eat thru plastic. Provide 1 – 2 inches of bedding. Proper bedding includes hardwood shavings (Pine or Aspen), pelleted or recycled products. **Cedar may be harmful and should not be used.**

Grass Hay in the cage provides an excellent substrate for burrowing, tunneling and nesting. Remove wet spots daily. Change bedding at least weekly. Clean habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water. Rinse and allow to dry completely before placing your pet back into the habitat.

Temperature: They acclimate well to average household temperatures. Be cautious of extreme temperature changes. Never place habitat in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.

Accessories: Many accessories are available at pet stores. Some include hiding places, exercise toys and wheels, educational books and chew sticks.

Behavior: Hamsters are active at night (nocturnal). Some may nip if startled. Both hamsters and gerbils chew to maintain proper condition of their incisor teeth. Make sure you have chew sticks available. Gerbils love to burrow, dig, climb and explore, so using cage attachments such as the connecting hard plastic tubes is very beneficial to your pets activity level needs.

Grooming & Hygiene: Hamsters and gerbils stay clean and do not need baths. Spot clean with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipes if needed. Wash your hands before and after handling your pet. Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should consult with their physician before purchasing a rodent. **Consult a veterinarian if their teeth or nails appear too long.**

Health Issues: Contact your exotic animal veterinarian immediately if you notice any of the following symptoms: diarrhea, hair loss, weight loss, overgrown teeth, abnormal breathing, skin lesions, lethargy or lack of energy, eye and/or nasal discharge.

We strongly recommend annual health examinations on all exotics!

