Golden Hamsters as Pets: Husbandry and Care of Syrian Hamsters

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Golden hamsters are also called "Syrian hamsters"; "teddy bear hamsters" are Syrian hamsters with long hair. One of the most important features of the Golden Hamster is its solitary nature. Though they are raised as part of a litter, once they are over 10 weeks of age, they will not tolerate the company of another hamster. They must be caged singly. Adult males will fight if caged together, sometimes killing one another. The breeding male must be removed from the litter. Golden Hamsters are also nocturnal, spending most of the day sleeping, and waking in the early evening to spend an active night.

Golden Hamsters have a relatively short life span, averaging around 2-2.5 years (though life spans of 4 years are on record). The Golden Hamster is also one of the largest hamsters, making it easier to handle. Its physical appearance includes a very short tail, large cheek pouches, small eyes, and a variety of appealing coat colors. Adults are generally 4" to 6" long, but females can grow up to 7" long. They have hairless feet, four toes on front feet and five toes on back feet.

The Golden Hamster originated in Syria, with the first record of it dating back to 1839. The Golden Hamsters available commercially today were introduced to the pet market in 1945 from captive hamsters bred at Hebrew University.

If you purchase a female hamster, remember that they come into season about every 4 days, and smell strongly at those times. You may wish to move your hamster to a well-ventilated area to reduce the odor, but be careful to maintain a warm temperature and avoid drafts.

Golden Hamsters are normally docile, especially with people. They react well to being handled. They do not move, urinate or defecate much, or even bite. Their ease of handling makes them especially good for children. Golden Hamsters are very inexpensive pets for warm-blooded animals. They are inexpensive to purchase, and they have low lifetime costs. They do not need much space or a big cage, and they do not need a lot of food and bedding. Lastly, Golden Hamsters are easy to keep. You do not have to spend a lot of time with them, their diets are easily satisfied, and they are hardy and resistant to disease. They are also the most popular type of hamster, making their requirements for care the best known of all hamsters.

Golden Hamster Facts

Origin:
Syrian desert

Size:
4" to 7"; females are larger and heavier.

Life Span:
2 to 2-1/2 years average.

Diet:
Hamster food and fresh vegetables.

Water:
Provide fresh every day.

Special Needs:
Hamsters' teeth continue to grow throughout their lives. Provide wood for chewing, avoid cedar or pine due to the oils they

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pile due to the oils they contain.

Vitamin Supplements:
Necessary. Add to water and provide a mineral block in the cage.

Breeding

Sexual Maturity:
4 to 6 months.

Fertility Cycle:
Females come into heat every four days.

Gestation Period:
16 to 18 days.

Cautions:
Do not allow the mother to feel threatened; she may eat the babies.

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