

## **The Dwarf Hamster – Ideal Family Pets**

Dwarf Hamsters are increasingly popular as family pets. Dwarf Hamsters by nature are very social animals. Therefore it is best to house them in pairs or in small social groupings. The one caveat to this advice is, in general, it is advised to keep the same gender Dwarf Hamsters together. Why? Housing dwarf hamsters in mixed gender groups will inevitably result in breeding. So be mindful of this fact when planning and caring for pet dwarf hamsters.

There are four species of dwarf hamsters that are popular as family pets, namely:

### **Campbells**

Common name: Campbells or Djungarian

Scientific name: Phodopus Campbelli

### **Winter White**

Common name: Russian Dwarf Hamster

Scientific name: Phodopus Sungorus

### **Roborovski**

Common name: Robo or Desert Hamster

Scientific name: Phodopus Roborovski

### **Chinese**

Common name: Striped Hamster

Scientific name: Phodopus Griseus

Even though Dwarf Hamsters are a social species, as noted above, it is well advised to house dwarf hamsters of the same species rather than mix species. This practice will reduce events of stress and fighting. Another general guide is to house together dwarf hamsters of a similar age and size.

There are many species of known Hamsters, but all of them share the same characteristics:

- 1). A Dwarf Hamster lives not more than three years or about 1000 days, which represents the short life span of these species. Females generally have a shorter life span compared to males.
  
- 2). The species of the Hamsters can be well predicted by their size which always ranges from 2 to 4 inches, which is the size range of a Dwarf Hamster.
  
- 3). There is a special characteristic for all Hamsters, having cheek pouches. They carry their food in these pouches.
  
- 4). You will notice two little bumps on the sides of the Dwarf Hamster, which are the scent glands. These scent glands are used for marking the territory of the Hamster.
  
- 5). In some hamster species, these scent glands are present on their abdomen instead of their sides. In certain cases like the Chinese Hamsters, they are present in both the places.

Dwarf Hamsters become sexually matured after 6 to 8 weeks from their birth and they have a pregnancy period as short as 15 days. The litter size of the Hamster depends on the species type, which averages around 6 to 8 pups. The pups are usually born hairless, blind and with closed ears. The hair starts growing after about 8 days after birth, the pups start to eat solid food after 7 to 10 days and they open their eyes after 15 days (Dwarf Hamsters take 12 days) completing their weaning at around the 21 to 25 day mark.

Hamsters are prone to stress and an inexperienced mother may eat her own pups when subjected to stress or threats. Consulting a detailed manual for dwarf hamster care can avoid such unwanted events after the mother has given birth to her pups.

A Hamster can be taken care of in the same way as your household pets. Always have a separate place for your Hamster by providing it an appropriate sized cage or aquarium. Provide adequate food and water supplies. Keep the habitat clean on a regular basis. Remove any soil related materials from their cage habit. And provide an assortment of 'toys', bedding, burrow and hideout materials.

Dwarf Hamsters make for an ideal household pet for families. With the correct care practices, dwarf hamsters are both affectionate and fun family pets. In general, dwarf hamsters are a 'low maintenance' pet. That said, it is still important to consult a good quality manual or guide before adopting a dwarf hamster to ensure the proper care is practiced for a long and healthy life for your pet dwarf hamster.