



MISFITS RESCUE

Syrian Hamster Care Guide

Syrian hamsters (also known as golden hamsters) are curious, active, mostly nocturnal pets who love to burrow, forage, explore and run. With the right setup and gentle handling, they can become confident and interactive.

Companionship

Syrian hamsters are solitary and should be kept alone. Housing Syrians together can lead to serious fighting, stress and injury.

Housing & Environment

Enclosure

Choose an enclosure that provides at least:

- 100cm (L) x 50cm (W) x 50cm (H) of *unbroken* floor space (bigger is always better).

Good enclosure styles:

- A well-ventilated tank-style enclosure with a secure mesh lid (great for deep bedding).
- A barred cage with a solid base (bar spacing needs to prevent escapes; Syrians generally need wider spacing than dwarf species, but still secure).

Avoid:

- Wire/mesh floors (can cause foot problems and prevent proper burrowing).

Placement in the home

- Keep indoors in a quiet, dry area away from draughts, damp, and direct sun.
- Avoid areas with sources of high-frequency noise (hamsters can find ultrasound stressful).
- Maintain a predictable light pattern (not bright/erratic lighting).



Bedding & Nesting

Suitable, safe bedding (for burrowing)

Provide a deep layer so your hamster can dig and make tunnels.

Examples of suitable bedding include:

- Dust-extracted paper-based bedding
- Wood pulp bedding
- Hemp bedding
- Dust-free wood shavings (chemical/preservative-free)
- Granulated corn-cob (chemical-free)

Nesting material (for sleeping & warmth)

Offer soft nesting material such as:

- Shredded paper or cardboard
- Good-quality hay
- Wood wool

Do not use “fluffy” cotton-wool style nesting (it can tangle limbs and be dangerous if swallowed).



Enrichment & Exercise (this is essential for welfare)

Hamsters need more than a wheel — aim for a setup that supports running, digging, hiding and foraging.

Wheel (must be safe)

- Use a large-diameter wheel so your hamster runs with a straight back.
- It should be solid, upright, axle-free, and ideally non-slip.

Syrian wheel size guide: 27–32cm diameter.



Other enrichment ideas

- Hides and shelters (at least one dark, secure hide; nesting box recommended).
- Tunnels (cardboard or plastic) for exploring.
- Chews/gnaw items (to support natural chewing behaviour).
- Foraging/scatter feeding (hide food around the enclosure to prevent boredom and encourage natural behaviour).

Diet & Water

Main diet

Feed:

- A complete hamster pellet or a balanced hamster seed mix formulated for hamsters.

Fresh foods (small amounts)

Offer small portions of:

- Leafy greens
- Washed vegetables / cleaned root veg
- Occasional fruit pieces (e.g., apple)



Avoid: grapes and rhubarb (these can be harmful).

Water

Fresh, clean water should be available at all times (bottle or heavy bowl, checked daily).

Treats (hamster-safe examples)

Treats should be tiny and occasional—think “training reward”, not daily extras.

Examples:

- A pinch of chopped greens or a small piece of veg
- A small piece of apple (occasionally)
- A small sprinkle of their normal mix hidden for foraging (counts as enrichment rather than “extra treats”).

Handling & routine

- Hamsters are most active at dusk/night — interact when they’re naturally awake.
- Handle gently and close to a soft surface (they’re delicate and can fall easily).
- Never wake a sleeping hamster for handling (this can be stressful).



Health & welfare checks

Check daily for changes in:

- Appetite, activity, droppings, breathing
- Lumps/bumps or difficulty moving
- Teeth issues (overgrown or misaligned incisors can stop them eating)

If you suspect illness, seek veterinary advice promptly.