



## **Chinese Hamster Care Guide**

Chinese hamsters are often grouped with dwarf hamsters due to their small size, but they are not true dwarf hamsters and have several distinct behavioural and housing needs. Their care should reflect their unique agility, climbing ability, and sensitivity to stress.

This guide has been created to create awareness and knowledge of the care Chinese hamsters need to thrive and whether they are the right pet for those looking to adopt.

### **Housing & Enclosure**

#### **Minimum Enclosure Size:**

Recommended minimum enclosure size:  
100cm (L) × 50cm (W) × 50cm (H)  
Although slender in build, Chinese hamsters are active and exploratory. Larger enclosures support better welfare by allowing natural behaviours such as climbing, burrowing, and foraging.



#### **Enclosure Design & Safety**

Chinese hamsters are skilled escape artists, so enclosures must be secure and carefully designed.

A suitable enclosure should include:

- A solid base (wire or mesh flooring is unsuitable)
- Secure construction with no gaps or weak points
- Narrow bar spacing if using a barred cage
- Good ventilation without draughts
- Plenty of floor space for exploration

Because of their climbing ability:

- All platforms and enrichment should be positioned at safe, low heights
- Tall, open drops should be avoided
- Solid shelves should be used rather than narrow ledges
- Safe access routes between levels should always be provided

Tank-style enclosures with secure mesh lids are often ideal, as they combine space, security, and depth for bedding.

Small novelty cages or shallow bases do not meet welfare needs and should be avoided.

## **Bedding & Nesting**

Chinese hamsters enjoy burrowing and tunnelling, although often less extensively than some dwarf hamster species.

### **Suitable Bedding**

Provide a deep layer (15–20cm) of one or a mix of the following:

- Dust-extracted paper bedding
- Aspen or other non-aromatic wood shavings
- Hemp bedding

Deep bedding allows burrowing, nesting, and temperature regulation.

### **Nesting & Hiding Spaces**

Chinese hamsters benefit from:

- Multi-chamber hides (supporting natural nest organisation)
- Long tunnels connecting different areas of the enclosure
- Enclosed sleeping spaces that provide darkness and security

Providing multiple hiding options allows the hamster to choose where to rest and helps reduce stress.



## **Diet & Nutrition**

Chinese hamsters can be prone to diabetes, so careful dietary management is essential.

### **Core Diet**

The main diet should consist of a balanced hamster mix that provides:

- Seeds and grains
- Fibre
- Appropriate protein (such as insects)

Scatter feeding is strongly recommended, as it:

- Encourages natural foraging behaviour
- Provides mental stimulation
- Helps prevent boredom

Fresh, clean water must always be available.



### **Fresh Foods (Small Amounts)**

Vegetables can be offered in small portions a few times per week, for example:

- Leafy greens
- Courgette
- Broccoli
- Cucumber
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Introduce new foods gradually and remove any uneaten fresh food after a few hours.

Avoid sugary foods and fruit, as these can increase the risk of diabetes and digestive upset.

## **Enrichment & Exercise**

Chinese hamsters need a balance of ground-level exploration and safe climbing opportunities.

### **Essential Enrichment**

- Solid running wheel (minimum 20–22cm diameter)
  - Must allow running with a straight back
- Tunnels and hides for exploration and security
- Climbing enrichment at safe heights, such as:
  - Low branches
  - Gently sloped platforms
- Sand bath for coat care and enrichment
- Safe chew items to support dental health



### **Additional Enrichment Ideas**

- Cardboard tubes and boxes
- Multi-level layouts with secure access
- Occasional rearrangement of non-nesting areas to encourage exploration

Avoid enrichment that encourages climbing without secure landing points.

## **Temperament & Behaviour**

Chinese hamsters are typically:

- Shy but highly intelligent
- Naturally alert and observant
- Agile and excellent climbers
- More mouse-like in appearance and movement
- Capable of forming strong bonds with patient, gentle handling

Unlike some other hamster species, Chinese hamsters may take longer to build confidence. They prefer calm, predictable routines and can become stressed by excessive noise, frequent disturbances, or rushed handling.

With time and consistency:

- Many Chinese hamsters become comfortable with gentle interaction
- Some enjoy exploring hands rather than being picked up
- Sudden handling, chasing, or grabbing can cause fear responses

Chinese hamsters are best suited to quiet households where interaction is calm and unhurried.

Important: Chinese hamsters are solitary animals and should always be housed alone. Keeping hamsters together can lead to fighting, stress, and serious injury.

## **Health & Welfare Checks**

Check your Chinese hamster daily for:

- Changes in activity or appetite
- Increased thirst or urination
- Weight loss or hunched posture
- Signs of injury from climbing or falls



If you notice any sudden or unusual changes, seek veterinary advice promptly. Early intervention is important, as small animals can decline quickly.

## **Is a Chinese Hamster Right for You?**

Chinese hamsters are best suited to homes that:

- Enjoy observing natural behaviour
- Can provide a large, secure enclosure
- Are calm and quiet
- Understand that handling may be limited

They may not be suitable for:

- Very young children
- Homes seeking frequent handling
- Small cages or limited space

## **Final Note**

Chinese hamsters are intelligent, engaging animals who thrive when their species-specific needs are understood and respected. With the right care, they can be fascinating companions to observe and care for.