



# Caring for your HAMSTER OR GERBIL

## Total hamster & gerbil wellbeing

From daily enrichment and balanced nutrition to physical exercise and loads of love, we focus on every aspect of small pet care to help you create a full, healthy and joyful life for the hamster or gerbil you love. In this care guide, we'll cover the basics of what you need to keep your pet happy and healthy.



## Fortified food

A daily recommended amount of a uniform, balanced fortified food is the foundation of your hamster or gerbil's daily nutrition and should make up approximately 75% of the daily diet.

Oxbow hamster and gerbil foods contain whole grain, plant-based ingredients for the health of your pet. Choose between Oxbow's four quality lines: Essentials, Forage Wise, Garden Select, and Simple Harvest.



**AVOID** mixes with nuts, corn, seeds, or fruit. Hamsters and gerbils are wired to selectively feed on these tempting morsels over the healthy pellets, leading to nutritional deficiencies.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT SELECTIVE FEEDING IN SMALL PETS:**



## Veggies, greens, & fruits

Veggies, greens, and fruits are an important part of your hamster or gerbil's daily diet. These fresh foods offer important vitamins and nutrients, help keep your pet hydrated, and provide enrichment to the daily routine.

**OFFER** romaine, kale, parsley, apples (without seeds), strawberries, bananas, peas, and squash.

**AVOID** leeks, chives, cabbage, iceberg lettuce, and onions

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BEST FRUITS FOR SMALL PETS:**



*Did you know* that small amounts of high-quality seeds (such as oats, sunflower seeds, barley, and cooked brown rice) and species-appropriate insects make great treats for hamsters and gerbils? Make sure to feed these tasty treats in moderation to avoid stomach upset.

## Treats

Treats (including fruits) are great for building the bond between you and your pet but should only be offered in moderation. All Oxbow treats are designed to be as wholesome as they are delicious.



## Nesting material

Hamsters and gerbils are expert nesters, so it's important to provide plenty of safe, comfortable nesting material for your pet to build with. Good nesting options include:

- High-Quality Paper Bedding
- Paper Nesting Disks
- Grass Hay (Many hamsters and gerbils especially enjoy Oat Hay, which often contains tasty, immature seed heads.)
- Newspaper, paper towels, or clean face tissues

## Housing your hamster or gerbil

Despite their diminutive size, hamsters and gerbils require ample space to live a healthy, happy, and enriched life.

- While recommendations for habitat size can vary, most hamsters and gerbils will do well in an appropriately designed habitat that provides between 360 – 450 sq in of living space. If you have specific questions regarding the appropriate amount of living space for your pet, it's always best to consult with your trusted veterinarian.
- Choose a multi-layered habitat with a solid bottom. Include dedicated hideouts for rest and relaxation, cardboard tubes, an exercise wheel, burrowing and nesting material, a dig box with calcium sand, a food bowl, and two sources of fresh, clean water.
- Set up your pet's habitat near household activities but away from windows and heating and cooling ducts.

**FIND A QUALIFIED EXOTICS VETERINARIAN NEAR YOU:**



## Your hamster or gerbil's health

You should visit a qualified exotics veterinarian at least once a year for checkups on your pet's diet, behavior, and health.

- Be prepared for your pet's visits by making a list of any questions or concerns you may have ahead of time and bringing examples of your pet's nutrition, habitat, and husbandry-related items.
- Many hamster and gerbil health problems are preventable with proper diet and care.

### REASONS TO CONTACT YOUR VET:

- Loose, soft, or lack of stool
- Small, dry, or infrequent stools
- Diarrhea or a wet bottom/tail
- Blood in the urine
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Sores on the feet
- Observed difficulty with chewing food
- Bald patches in the fur
- Abnormal eating or drinking
- Hunching in a corner or lack of activity (lethargy)



## Enriching your pet's world

All hamsters and gerbils are wired to engage in a set of core instinctual behaviors each day. These behaviors include chewing, playing, hiding, and exploring. Intentionally encouraging these behaviors in healthy ways is called enrichment.

- Support all four behaviors in a variety of ways each day to support your pet's mental and physical health.
- Providing daily enrichment is a fun, interactive way to build your bond with your hamster or gerbil.
- Offer a variety of natural chews, engagement accessories, places for rest and relaxation, and exercise items daily.
- Oxbow's Enriched Life accessories are designed to help make enrichment fun, easy, and safe!

**GET MORE ENRICHMENT INSPIRATION FOR YOUR PET:**



## Supplies for your hamster or gerbil

- A complete, uniform fortified food:** one of Oxbow's four premium formulas for hamsters and gerbils.
- Oxbow treats** for healthy bonding and enrichment
- Water bottle, no-tip water dish, and no-tip food bowl**
- Multiple **Enriched Life natural chews and accessories**
- Large **play yard** for safe exercise outside the habitat
- Large habitat** with solid, non-wire flooring
- Multiple **hiding spaces**
- Bedding material**, such as **Oxbow's Pure Comfort**. Avoid aromatic cedar and pine shavings that may contain resin and could irritate your pet's lungs and skin.
- Natural Science supplements** as needed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HAMSTER AND GERBIL CARE AND BEHAVIOR, VISIT [WWW.OXBOWANIMALHEALTH.COM](http://WWW.OXBOWANIMALHEALTH.COM)

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