

significant wounds to each other, if housed together.

Hamsters should be housed in easy-to-clean, well-ventilated and escape-proof enclosures (Hoppmann and Barron, 2007). There are various substrates that can be used, all of which should be absorbable. Hamsters will urinate regularly in comparison to gerbils and should be spot-cleaned daily. They should be provided with the ability to exercise – often using some form of wheel – as well as with hides, tunnels, items to chew and material with which to nest (Hoppmann and Barron, 2007). If the ambient temperatures drop below 5°C, hamsters will try to hibernate. This should be prevented (Hoppmann and Barron, 2007).

In this author's opinion, the ideal diet for a hamster should consist predominantly of a pellet-based food, small amounts of vegetables, and the occasional insect as a treat. Hamsters will use their large cheeks for food storage, and fresh water should be provided at all times, ideally in the form of a 'sipper' bottle. Hamsters are coprophagic (Hoppmann and Barron, 2007).

Common infectious conditions seen in hamsters are listed in **Table 3**.

As with gerbils, there are drug contraindications for hamsters – penicillin, amoxicillin, amoxicillin/clavulanic acid, ampicillin, clindamycin, cephalosporin, streptomycin, lincomycin or erythromycin antibiotics should never be used in these species (Hoppmann and Barron, 2007). ■

PPD Questions

- How are gerbils best housed?
 - on their own
 - same-sex pairings
 - opposite sex pairings.
- What level of humidity should be obtained in gerbil care?
 - >50%
 - <50%.
- Where do gerbils get the majority of water from?
 - their diet
 - they do not need water
 - water bowl/bottle.
- Below what temperature will hamsters attempt to hibernate?
 - below 1°C
 - below 5°C
 - below 10°C.
- What organ is most commonly affected in polycystic disease in hamsters?
 - kidney
 - heart
 - intestine
 - liver.

1.B 2.B 3.A 4.B 5.D
Answers

References

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