

# **10 Secrets to Raising a Healthy, Happy Dwarf Hamster**

## **Secret #1: Finding Joy with a Pocket Pet**

What's in your pocket?

If it's not a dwarf hamster, then you're definitely missing out on one of the greater joys of life. And just in case you're wondering, they're called pocket pets, because, well . . . they're small enough to fit in your pocket!

Measuring in at less than four inches in length, these little mammals provide the whole family with a huge amount of pleasure . . . entertainment . . . and of course love!

But we'll warn you right now: while they're small, they aren't without their needs, just like any living pet. You'll find, though, that spending time caring for these guys, playing and interacting with them will provide you with some of the best moments of your day!

If you're interested in owning one of these great pets, you've come to the right place. In this eCourse, you'll learn the secrets that allow you to be a successful owner of a dwarf hamster.

It's no secret that that these guys need love . . . and attention. But we'll clue you in on how you can do this with ease . . . and be confident that you're providing your dwarf hamster with the good life!

### **The first secret . . .**

Is there a difference, you ask, between a hamster and a dwarf hamster? Yes. The dwarf hamster, as we mentioned, is only four inches – tops – in length. He's small enough to easily pass between the bars of a standard wire cage.

A hamster – usually called the Golden or Syrian hamster – is twice the size of the dwarf. He measures a full eight inches (on a good day of course!).

If you've never experienced the presence of either of these wonderful creatures in your home . . . my, my, you're in for a pleasant surprise!

## **Secret #2:**

### **Shh! You have your choice of four types of dwarf hamsters!**

Welcome to Secret #2 of raising a healthy, happy dwarf hamster! By the time you've finished reading all 10 of these secrets, you'll be confident that you'll be a good – no, great! – parent to your new pet hamster.

So, Snow White may have had her seven dwarfs. But they don't compare at all to the four dwarfs we're about to discuss in this lesson. And, no, their names aren't even near Dopey, Doc, Happy, Sleepy, Sneezy . . . well you get the idea.

First off, you need to know that a dwarf hamster – all hamsters actually – are a part of the rodent family. Yes, the same family that brings you mice and rats.

But, you'll discover that these creatures are related in name only.

### **Four types of dwarfs**

So what are the four types of dwarf hamsters you can choose to love? The Chinese Dwarf Hamster, Campbell's Dwarf Russian Hamster, Winter White Russian Hamster, Roborovski Hamster.

These guys differ by color and, most notably, by their geographical origins. Other than that, if you're not breeding or showing hamsters (yes, just like dog shows, there are "hamster shows"), all of these furry guys are similar.

There is one major difference in these four species, though. The Chinese hamster is sometimes called the mouse-like hamster. Why? Because he's the only species with a tail.

Yes, every other hamster has no tail! How cute is that?

And the Roborovski hamster – he's the smallest of the quartet, coming in at just under four inches in size. (Somehow, though, when you're that small, does it really matter?) The "robo hamster" is also the friendliest of this set.

Very often, if the dwarf hamster is socialized and accustomed to people, they tend to nip humans. (With a little patience, effort and energy, you can reduce this to a minimum!)

## **Secret #3: Successfully Adopting Your Dwarf Hamster**

You're still with us? Good. Hope you've been thinking of appropriate names for your pet hamster. In this secret – Secret #3 -- we'll let you in on where you can find the healthiest – and consequently – the happiest dwarf hamsters!

Think there's nothing to adopting a dwarf hamster. Quick! Where can you find one?

Okay, so you got lucky by guessing the pet store. But don't discount several other very good sources of adoption.

The first is the classified ads of your local newspaper. You just may find a dwarf hamster that needs a loving home. Of course, there is one disadvantage in this. You don't know his "heritage" or how he's been treated. So, if you take this route to adoption, don't be shy about asking lots of questions.

What type of questions, you ask? Well, for starters, why the family has decided it needs to find him another home. Also, ask what type of personality this little dwarf has . . . whether he nips . . . and also about what he's been being fed and what his needs are when it comes to daily care.

You can always search the internet for a good dwarf hamster, as well. You may not realize this, but you can adopt a great dwarf hamster from a professional breeder. Just like you'd go to a dog breeder for a purebred canine, you go to a dwarf hamster breeder to find a quality purebred hamster.

And there are definite advantages to this. In this way, you'll know not only the exact birthday of your little pet, but you also know more about his parents. And that's not just for social reasons.

If you know about his parents, then you have a heads up on what potential health problems may creep up on him – or if you can expect him to live a healthy life.

And if you ever decide you want to breed hamsters yourself, then you have a much better idea of what to expect the offspring to look like, what their colors may be, and what their temperament might be, as well.

Don't think you have any dwarf hamster breeders in your area? You may not, but then again, how often have you actually searched for this specialized profession?

You may want to start your search at a county fair or even a state fair. Many times, dwarf hamsters are shown there – along with the rabbits, miniature horses and other animals.

And if you can't find what you're looking for there, you can certainly ask around. Someone certainly can help point you in the proper direction.

Don't give up on your hunt for the perfect dwarf hamster! You'll find him!

### **Secret #4: Creating a Happy Home**

Imagine this scene: You've found the dwarf hamster of your dreams. You adopt him. You bring him home. Uhm . . . did you happen to buy a cage for him? You didn't? So where do you exactly think he'll live?

Before you even consider buying a hamster, you need to make sure that you have a happy home all set up for him. Don't worry, it needn't be an elaborate home. Actually it can be as simple as a 10-gallon aquarium.

You may be more familiar with the wire cages for hamsters. And while you may be tempted to buy one of these, think twice about it. Why? Because of the size of your new friend. If you recall from one of the previous secrets, these guys are so small, they can slip right between the bars of a wire cage. And finding a pet this small can be quite a chore! Besides, it's not safe for your Henry Hamster to be roaming free. Your house has plenty of hazards for this guy. And it can be especially hazardous if you already own a dog or a cat!

The ideal happy home for your dwarf hamster is actually a plastic cage. He won't be able to slip through the cracks and you can always add traveling tubes and other nifty additions when the time is right. He'll certainly appreciate this as well.

And while you're creating this home, make sure you buy your new buddy a hamster wheel. His ancestors in the wild had to scurry around for up to three miles or more just to find food. So he's got some "built-in" genetic needs to exercise – and exercise a lot. Just one word of caution in choosing the wheel----don't buy one that has those metal rungs. Nope. Your Henry Hamster has tiny little feet. And these cute little feet just might get caught and injured on a wheel with rungs. Find one that's flat.

Searching for the perfect home for your friend should keep you busy until we reveal our next secret – and that's training your dwarf hamster to use the litter box.

## **Secret #5: Training Your Dwarf Hamster to Use a Litter Box**

Welcome to the eCourse, 10 Secrets to Raising a Healthy, Happy Dwarf Hamster. We're already on Secret #5, Training Your Dwarf Hamster to Use a Litter Box.

And the real secret here is that it doesn't take any training at all.

It's true! Hamsters – much like cats – are fastidious about their cleanliness. If you don't supply them with a litter box (which you can buy at any pet store) they'll dedicate one corner for their bathroom. And that's not necessarily a bad thing.

In fact, depending on the size of his cage, he may set himself up with several bathrooms. (Who wants to travel too far when Mother Nature calls anyway?) The larger the space you provide your dwarf to roam, the more bathroom areas he'll probably create.

Your hamster will use his bedding material and other shavings as his restroom. You'll need to clean it out every day, though.

If you don't want to buy the guy a litter box, you can always provide him with a "homemade" container. A small jar with a large mouth opening can work fine for a litter box. While this, too, will need to be cleaned every day, it'll save you from having to clean the bedding daily.

If you decide buy a litter box, you have two styles from which to choose, a rectangular style that fits up against any wall in his home or a triangular shape. The triangular litter box is perfect for a corner.

Carefully observe exactly where you pet goes to relief himself. Then you'll know where to put the boxes.

## **Secret #6: Separating the Boys from the Girls (before it's too late!)**

*So, you've just bought your first dwarf hamster. And what's his name? Henry! Let me see the little guy . . .*

*Uh! You may want to call your new pet "Henrietta."*

*Don't be embarrassed. Lots of people have a problem distinguishing the sexes of their dwarf hamster. The real "problem" occurs because the hamsters themselves have absolutely no problem telling the boys from the girls.*

That's exactly what this secret is all about: helping you separate the boys from the girls. It's important that you do this – and the sooner the better.

Hamsters are sexually mature at the tender age of one month. And they come into "season" as they call it – when they're fertile and can get pregnant – once every four days!

First, you need to know that telling the boys from the girls in animals this small is not necessarily easy. The best method is just to take your dwarf hamster to a veterinarian who specializes in rodents and let him struggle with the decision (and believe me, just because he's had schooling in this area doesn't make it any easier for him).

Each of the following techniques, by the way, relies strictly on observation – so they all have some level of probability built in.

First, pick up your new pet so you can see his stomach and his genitalia . . . yes, this is crucial! You'll know right off if you have a female, because her stomach will have the mammary glands – nipples that are for feeding her young. If you can't really tell – and sometimes you can't – there are still several other methods you can use to solve this embarrassing dilemma.

You can always double check this by examining the animal's genitalia. Males of course will have testicles. Then check further – because the animal is so small these methods are sometimes less than foolproof. You see, quite frankly, what some people refer to as "urine holes."

Technically speaking, the space between these "urine holes" is called the *anogenital distance*. This specifically refers to the distance between the genital openings and the anus. In the male it would be the distance between the penile opening and the anus. In the females, you're looking at the distance between the vaginal and urinary openings.

If your new hamster is a male, these orifices are spaced much farther apart (relatively speaking on an animal is four inches long at most!) than the females.

### **Secret #7: Getting your dwarf hamster to accept you**

Doesn't seem as if this should be much of a chore, now does it? I mean after all, you might think cynically, you're the one in control. In control of cleaning his home. In control of feeding times. In control of just about everything dealing with this guy. Some people would say he should be making friends with you – and pretty darn fast.

But consider this fact. He's a mere four inches large and you . . . well, you must appear to be quite a giant in his eyes. And anything that's that large could be potentially dangerous – and definitely scary.

So, you'll have to use some patience and dedication to earn the trust and the affection of Henry Hamster.

The first thing you want to remember is that you don't want to pounce on poor Henry the moment you bring him home. Oh, you'll be tempted. But he's already going to be frightened. So the best thing you can do is simply set him in a dark room for several days to a week. During this time, the only time you should have with him is to give him food.

Once a week or so has passed, then you can take a tissue rub your hands with it and stick it in the cage. Hamsters have a wonderful sense of smell. This is the perfect way to get him to recognize your scent. After about a week, then you can slowly and carefully place your hand in his cage for him to smell you.

If he bites you, remove your hand immediately and try the "getting-to-know-you" ritual the following day. Eventually, he'll crawl over your fingers and even around your arm. Then before you know it, you'll be able to take him out of the cage and give him some "out-of-cage" experience . . . better known as playtime.

Before you know it, you two will be the best of friends. The only thing you really need to keep in mind is that you make friends on his terms --- not yours!

**Secret #8:**  
**“Wet tail? But he doesn’t even have a tail!”**

Yes, it’s true! Your dwarf hamster has the potential when you bring him home of getting a disease known to hamsters and several other animals called wet tail.

And indeed this is no mean feat, considering that the majority of dwarf hamsters don’t even have tails. Wet tail is the more common name of a disease – usually brought on by stressful situations and less than clean conditions – in which your hamster has developed a serious case of diarrhea. Hence the name, wet tail.

Wet tail, however, is far more than just a bad case of the “runs.” The diarrhea is caused by bacteria that can, within 48 hours, be lethal to your new friend. So, when you bring your friend home, even though you don’t want to touch him much, check in on him frequently.

If your new hamster has wet tail, he’ll appear lethargic, will not have much energy, he won’t want to eat and he’ll stop grooming himself.

You can also tell by the look in the hamster’s eyes that something is not well. The eyes will appear dull and sunken. The hamster affected with wet tail may sit “hunched up” (you’ll know this as soon as you see this!) and he may be irritable. The irritability is quite understandable since he’s in quite a bit of pain in this abdominal area.

If you notice that he has a bad case of diarrhea, take him to the veterinarian immediately. Don’t hesitate.

You’ll want to make sure, though, that you find a vet that is knowledgeable in rodents. Not every animal doctor is!

**Secret #9:  
But I thought I had two girls in the same cage!"**

Did you think you had two girls or two boys in the same cage only to find that Henry became Henrietta? And you only discovered this because Henrietta gave birth to even smaller hamsters than she is?

Well, that's one way to jump into the breeding of hamsters. It's not the recommended method, that's for sure.

No, to be a successful hamster breeder, you need to know your males from your females right from the start. And more than that, you really need to know a little bit about the genetics of their parents as well. After all, you're going to have babies. You want to make sure that not only will they be pretty, but healthy.

The best age to breed a female is at about four months of age. Once the female reaches the age of four months, you can put them in the same cage. But be careful how you introduce the two. Hamsters, the darling little things they are, do have some territorial issues.

Female hamsters, being the nocturnal creatures that they are, come into season in the evening. They can stay in season for anywhere between four and 24 hours. A female is fertile for only the first year to 14 months of her life. But, evidently, nobody has bothered to tell her that. She continues to come into heat even after she attains this age.

You can take the female and place her in the male's cage. Or you can place the couple together on some neutral territory. But don't place the male in the female's cage. Your couple will take it from there. They'll sniff each other. You'll notice the female freezes in a distinctive position with her tail in the air. If the male hamster hasn't mated before, he may get a little confused at this point.

Let me just clue you in on something, though. When your female does get pregnant, she can have between 6 and 12 pups (that's what the babies are called!) in a litter. I suggest that you be prepared to know what you're going to do with the young before they are born, because the females will be able to have little ones themselves within a few short weeks of giving birth.

This gives you a good idea of the breeding process.

---

## **Secret #10: Bringing Up Babies**

In the last secret, we revealed how it's far too easy to end up with an accidental litter of dwarf hamsters. In the same secret, though, we learned what it takes to breed a pair of hamsters.

First, the birth and maturity of a baby hamster is like watching a life run in the fast forward mode. Everything about this happens far more quickly than it does for humans. Here's just one indication----a human carries a baby for nine months before giving birth; a dwarf hamster only carries her babies for 16 days. Two weeks and two days!

Once the babies are born, though, just what do you do with them? That's what we reveal in this secret! When the litter of your female hamster is born your job is fairly easy. You do nothing. That's right! Absolutely nothing. If you touch the baby dwarfs too early, Mom Hamster provides them with the ultimate rejection. The babies will have your scent on them. The consequences to this are not very pleasant—Mom will probably eat them.

Wait until the little guys are at least two weeks old, then it's safe to handle them.

Mom takes care of just about everything. The tiny creatures are born blind and furless. And ,oh yes, transparent. Yes, I said transparent. When a baby hamster is born, you can literally see the inner workings of his body. Watch closely as the baby suckles milk from Mom. If you look real close, you can see the milk go from the mouth down to his stomach. How cool is that?

There's more to learn about baby hamsters. And if you want to learn more about how to take good care of the babies (and among other things when to remove the boys from the girls so you don't have babies having babies), go to [www.getagripon.com/dwarfhamsters/ebook.html](http://www.getagripon.com/dwarfhamsters/ebook.html)