

## **HAMSTER, RAT, GUINEA PIG, CHINCHILLA CARE    PET CARE SHEET**

**HAMSTERS** are nocturnal ( they are active at night ) . Syrian ( Golden ) hamsters must be kept alone otherwise they will fight. Russian and Chinese ( Dwarf ) hamsters may be kept as same species pairs ( but note mixed sex pairs will rapidly breed ). Feed a good quality complete food eg Harry hamster and always provide access to fresh water. Hamsters should always be kept indoors in plastic or glass cages – the largest you can provide is best as hamsters like to explore, keep the cage away from draughts. Never use cotton , nylon or fibre bedding as this is dangerous if swallowed and can also get twisted around feet. Shredded kitchen towel paper is best. Hamsters exercise for 3-4 hours each night and will enjoy a wheel - which should be solid to avoid foot injury – they also like to chew wood and cardboard tubes and love toys. Try to handle your hamster daily and at the same time check that he's clean around the face and under the tail. All hamsters have a dark patch on each hip which is a scent gland.

**RATS** are awake during the day and like to live in pairs – 2 male or female littermates are ok together. Rats need a well balanced diet like Reggie rat supplemented with small amounts of carrot, apple and cooked egg and must always have fresh water. Rats need plenty of space to play and climb so tall cages or aquariums are fine furnished with ladders, branches and swings with daily free running exercise out of the cage. For bedding use paper towel ( see notes on Hamsters )and provide plenty of wooden and cardboard items for your pet to chew . Handle your pet every day and pay attention to the length of the teeth and claws and check for lumps and bumps on the skin. Do not lift your rat using only the tail. Rats live about 2-3 years

**GUINEA PIGS** are sociable and should be kept in pairs and groups, they are active during the day and live about 7 years– males can be neutered to prevent breeding. Guinea pigs should be fed a diet of hay, grass ( but not lawn clippings ) and dandelion supplemented with a complete high fibre diet, always provide fresh water. Guinea pigs can be kept indoors or outdoors – but must be allowed to exercise every day – outside arks provide security from predators but should incorporate shelter against rain and sun. The hutch should be wind and rainproof and positioned out of the full sun, consider moving into a garage during winter months – guinea pigs are very sensitive to temperature extremes and temperatures above 27 deg C can cause fatal heat stroke . Wood shavings or hay makes the best bedding – straw is too sharp and can injure the eyes. A high fibre diet which requires chewing is essential to prevent tooth problems which is the major cause of disease in Guinea pigs .

**CHINCHILLAS** are timid creatures – so they are not really suitable for small children, however they are friendly by nature and if handled gently will live up to 20 years, they can be kept alone or in groups. Chinchillas are naturally nocturnal but eventually become active during the day. Gentle but firm handling is essential – hold your chinchilla under the shoulders and support the animal's weight with your other hand – if you are gentle your pet will not bite. Keep chinchillas in large wire cages with several levels and provide them with branches and cuttlefish bone to chew. The cage should be away from draughts – Chinchillas can tolerate cold but become distressed in higher temperatures above 20 deg C. Allow your chinchilla a dust bath in chinchilla sand twice a week Feed your pet on good quality pellets – avoid sunflower seed, peanuts or flaked maize

The Shrubbery Veterinary Centre, 65 Perry Street, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8RD.  
Tel: 01474 534891\333141 & 5 The Link New Ash Green Tel: 01474 873370

