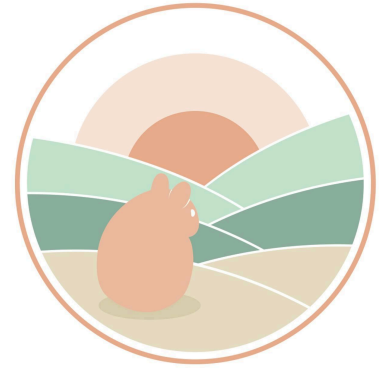


BRIGHT HORIZON HAMSTER RESCUE

Registered Charity 1201796



ADOPTING A HAMSTER

Thank you so much for choosing to adopt a hamster.

Instead of giving profit to a breeder or a pet shop, you're supporting the welfare of the hamster you adopt, and helping to show the world how hamsters should live.

THIS GUIDE HAS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

- **How Bright Horizon's adoption process works**
- **Our adoption standards**
- **Setting up a safe and enriching enclosure**

Please read this whole guide carefully before committing yourself to the adoption process.

Bright Horizon is a registered charity run entirely by volunteers, the majority of whom are neurodivergent. We do our very best to reply swiftly and efficiently. Please bear in mind that we can't always respond immediately.

We promise the hamsters who come to Bright Horizon a lifetime of excellent care, and we keep them in our home foster care until we can find them their dream home. If you are new to proper care, our adoption standards can seem high, because the general level of safety and care in the UK is sadly so low. We understand it's a lot to take in at the start: we can support you throughout the learning journey.

YOU ARE HERE	Understand our adoption process
FIND YOUR HAMSTER MATCH	Find a hamster near you that suits you, your enclosure plans and your lifestyle
MESSAGE OUR TEAM	We'll chat through and make sure it's a good match
RESERVE A HAMSTER	Complete an Adoption Form: we can talk through any worries you or we have
SET UP & SHARE	The exciting part: we support you in getting it right
FINAL APPROVAL	We agree your set-up and care, and can confirm the BIG DAY
ADOPTION DAY	We meet you with your new friend!
LIFETIME AFTERCARE	We're here for the life of your hamster

Sometimes, if there's a lot to set up, we may ask that you're a little way into the process before we reserve a hamster for you, so that we can plan ahead for incoming rescued hamsters.

It's difficult for us to "hold" hamsters for longer than three weeks, but every situation is individual.

We can work towards, but can't set, an adoption day until we've approved the final enclosure. All adoptions proceed only when BH is happy with the enclosure, and the compatibility of the hamster and the human.

PLEASE NOTE:

If you already have a hamster, it is a requirement that they are housed in a 100x50cm+ enclosure before we can adopt another to you.

We are not able to accept adoption applications from people who have previously surrendered a hamster, to our charity or to other rescues with whom we work.

YOUR HAMSTER'S SET-UP

We adhere strictly to the UK guidelines on minimum enclosure size, as supported by the PDSA and Blue Cross.

We will not permit any hamster to be adopted into any enclosure below 100x50cm.

To adopt from us, we expect you to have researched and put effort into your new friend's home. Setting up and perfecting a hamster's enclosure is fun and exciting: if you don't find the process enjoyable, it might be that a hamster isn't the ideal companion for you as keeping their enclosure fresh and enriching is a huge part of caring for them.

Some enclosures that meet minimum size requirements may not be suitable for a particular species or individual for other reasons: too much or too little height, a wooden enclosure for a chewer, a barred enclosure for a hamster with bar trauma etc.

Always check with us before spending money to make sure your enclosure is suitable for the hamster you would like to adopt.

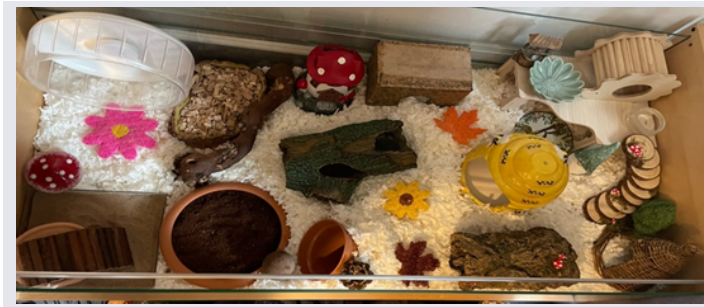
We look for safety first, quality of enrichment, and enclosures that allow the hamster to fulfil all of their natural behaviours.

We understand not everyone can afford the latest premium hamster products from expensive companies. The same enrichment can be achieved with affordable and often household items; we would much prefer you to reserve funds for ongoing care, or possible vet bills than to spend huge sums of money.

What your enclosure contains will vary depending on the species, age and personality of the individual hamster. That doesn't have to mean an expensive showhome, and not everyone is an interior designer!

The setup below shows the importance of providing enrichment for your hamsters including different substrates, forage, sprays etc.

WITHOUT ENRICHMENT



WITH ENRICHMENT



Making the difference between barely meeting, and exceeding, minimum requirements is what will give your application the edge.

Our Setup Inspo section on Instagram will give you some great ideas!

https://www.instagram.com/bright_horizon_hamster_rescue/

The most important thing to remember is that lots of products commonly sold in pet shops are labelled as “safe”, but have been proven by scientific research to be dangerous.

Sadly, we cannot trust safety claims on most packaging.

It’s natural to question why we consider a product unsafe, when dangerous products are sold everywhere and normalised as safe.

We’re happy to share research and evidence of why familiar products are dangerous for hamsters if you’re interested: there’s too much to list here!

Don’t panic: if we see something in your final set-up pictures that is unsafe, we’ll simply ask you to remove it and suggest a safe replacement. We have years of experience, and we don’t expect adopters to memorise every product on the market. We’re not judgemental and we want your adoption to go swimmingly.

We have listed the **most easily accessible products** that are safe, and the ones to avoid. This isn’t a complete list:

IN THE ENCLOSURE

ESSENTIAL	Wheel	Solid, with no gaps or ridges Minimum wheel diameter (bigger is better): Syrian - 28cm+ Chinese - 28cm+ Russian/Campbells - 21cm+ Roborovski - 21cm+
ESSENTIAL	DEEP BEDDING Soft bedding Bedding for building burrows	At least 25cm deep, ideally deeper - and in at least HALF of the enclosure, ideally more. Individual hamsters may require more bedding depth.

		<p>Hamsters need both soft bedding for nesting, and “diggable” bedding that holds burrows well. Often, combining two types of bedding creates the best burrowing potential. We can advise!</p> <p>SAFE SOFT BEDDING: Carcroft teabag, Kaytee, Carefresh, Small Pet Select</p> <p>UNSAFE: Any scented version, kapok fluff, cotton or fibre-based (eg: Pets at Home “Paper Bedding”, shredded cloth), printed paper, almost all hay</p> <p>SAFE BURROWING BEDDING:: hemp or aspen based bedding (eg: Aubiose), Megazorb, Chipsi unscented</p> <p>UNSAFE: pinewood shavings, sawdust, bedding pellets</p>
ESSENTIAL	Large sand bath	<p>SAFE: dry, undyed desert sand, no added calcium/minerals</p> <p>Brands to try: Komodo, Unipac, Pets at Home reptile range</p> <p>UNSAFE: ALL dyed sand/calci-sand (including those made by the above safe brands), chinchilla sand/dust, wet sand</p>
ESSENTIAL	Foraging/exploring substrates	<p>AT LEAST three additional substrates for digging, exploring & foraging (in large safe containers):</p> <p>SAFE: beech chips, dried coco soil, coco chips, cork chips, safe dry moss (eg: Niteangel, Rodipet)</p> <p>UNSAFE: pinewood shavings, sawdust, wet substrates of any kind, scented products</p>
ESSENTIAL	Hides, tunnels and “clutter”	<p>All entrances 7cm+ for Syrians; no small or paned holes/”windows”. Gaps in hides, bridges etc will need to be blocked with safe bedding or moss to prevent injury to limbs.</p> <p>SAFE: non-pinewoods, ceramics, hard plastics, unbleached/plain card, cork logs, natural logs (clean, free of sharp parts and from safe plants eg: grapevine, bamboo root)</p> <p>UNSAFE: treated pinewoods, thin plastics, hay or straw based “chewable” hides, most paints and varnish, many glues.</p>
ESSENTIAL	Sprays, forage & organics	<p>For a full list please ask for our infographic!</p> <p>SAFE: Reputable UK small businesses (eg: HamstersWeLove); Rosewood “Pic & Fly” and “Harvest Festival”, millet sprays for aviaries, fresh herbs & safe live plants potted in coco soil</p> <p>UNSAFE: dyed or treated dried flowers for crafting; excessive amounts of edible sprays (delica and pagima grasses are good choices as they are enriching but rarely eaten), potting soil/peat</p>
ESSENTIAL	Chews & Boredom Breakers	<p>There are many on the market; most are unsuitable</p> <p>SAFE: seagrass/hemp, Whimzee-brand chews, home-made boredom breakers (we have guides), hard shelled nuts</p> <p>UNSAFE: Compacted sawdust/straw chews, dyed or coloured items, anything with string or wire parts</p>
ESSENTIAL	Barred cages: bedding risers	<p>To achieve 20cm of bedding, barred cages need screens around the edges. These also prevent bar climbing.</p> <p>SAFE: Grass mats, plain unbleached card, perspex screens, safe wood panels</p> <p>UNSAFE: printed/dyed card, MDF/chipboard, varnished wood</p>

OUTSIDE THE ENCLOSURE - HOME ROOM

ESSENTIAL	Secure	Doors and windows close securely, with no gaps in the floorboards or access to the inside of walls. Check and protect the corners of the room, plug sockets & cables, gaps under doors.
ESSENTIAL	Safe temperatures, 24/7	Hamsters need the temperature around them to stay between 15 and 30c to stay well. Below, they risk torpor. Above, they risk heatstroke.
ESSENTIAL	Peaceful	The room where your hamster lives needs to be away from general household noise, especially sudden or loud noises
ESSENTIAL	No other household animals	Predator animals should never be allowed to meet or interact with a hamster, or be unsupervised with access to a hamster's home room. However well trained, predators are instinctively opportunistic and prey animals are instinctively frightened of them
ESSENTIAL	Young children	Hamsters are not suitable companions for small children. All contact should be supervised and respectful, and hamsters should always be allowed to wake naturally (or they can be very grumpy!)

TIME OUTSIDE THE ENCLOSURE

Exercising your hamster outside of their cage is extremely important not only for their health but to also help strengthen your bond with the hamster.

However enriching the enclosure is, hamsters are adventurous animals who need the ability to explore new things. There are three main ways to exercise your hamster.

PLAY PEN

Especially suitable for dwarf species. Playpens come in all shapes and sizes; some are pop-ups, others are connectable grids. Exercising hamsters in playpens must always be conducted under supervision. You can also build your own play area, if you have the space.

FREE-ROAM

Free roaming hamsters, as with playpens, should always be conducted under supervision. Free roaming should be conducted in a hamsterproofed room. Sections of the room that aren't hamster safe can be blocked off.

BATHTUB

As with the other two methods this should be done under supervision. A bathtub lined with a blanket can be a safe secure way to get your hamster out for bonding or exercise and is often referred to as "bathtub bonding".

Hamster balls are not safe and should never be used!

DONATIONS & ADOPTIONS

Our adoption donation is £20, and includes our adoption pack. You can donate on the day of your adoption or before, via the Linktree on our website or in your Adoption Handover.

Your adoption donation is not a deposit, or a guarantee that the adoption will proceed, but if for any reason it does not proceed, we will return it to you.

Our Adoption Pack includes a month's supply of the food they are used to - most of our team use Hammykins - and healthy treats.

We offer full support after adoption via our exclusive adopters' Facebook group which you are welcome to join via a link we will send you. It's a small, friendly and non-judgemental space to keep in touch and ask for advice. We miss all of our fosters and love seeing their happy futures too.

HEALTH, WELLBEING & VET CARE

It's no secret that vet bills can be expensive. Vet bills for hamsters can be especially expensive as they are classed as exotic animals.

It's essential to find a vet practice that has an exotics specialist; it's also important to know where to find a vet that offers a 24 hour service in case of emergencies.

We recommend calling around vets in your local area to see what services they offer for small animals and if they have an exotic specialist onsite.

We assess every hamster who enters our care for an absolute minimum of two weeks (or species-specific pregnancy-watch for all females). Even minor concerns are checked by our vets before a hamster is made available for adoption.

Any known-historical, existing or suspected health issues are shared with you before adoption; if the hamster may be particularly prone to any health conditions or behavioural issues due to age, sex, pre-rescue conditions etc we will share this with you.

Many of our hamsters come from terrible backgrounds, and in some cases little is known about how they lived before they arrived. We can't "guarantee" you a hamster who won't have any health issues - no pet shop or breeder can, whatever they claim - but we are here with expert advice and we always want to hear if a hamster is poorly, so we can support you practically and emotionally.

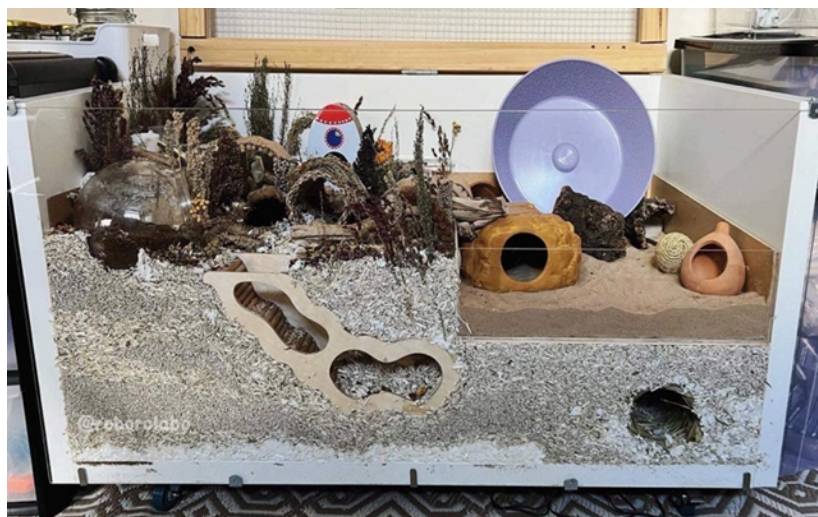
You commit to all veterinary care costs when you adopt: however in the very unusual case that the hamster requires much more specialist care than you are reasonably able to give, by adopting from BH you agree to always speak to us as a first call.. We can talk through the best options for the hamster and help make an expert decision about their future care.

DIET

Good diet is absolutely essential to a hamster's long life and good health. The majority of our fosters are fed with the same seed mix you will receive in your adoption boxes (Hammykins). Some are fed other high quality mixes depending on what their foster prefers: we will let you know which food they are used to eating.

We strongly recommend avoiding low quality food mixes such as Pets at Home and supermarket own-brand, Harry Hamster, Johnson's etc which are often very high in sugars, and don't have enough nutrients in the right balances to keep hamsters thriving.

We will ask you what food you intend to use, as good nutrition is essential to every hamster's long life and wellbeing.



PLACES TO FIND OUT MORE

Blue Cross: <https://www.bluecross.org.uk/advice/hamster/wellbeing-and-care/hamster-care?amp>

PDSA: <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/pet-help-and-advice/looking-after-your-pet/small-pets/hamster-advice>

HamsterWelfare.com: <https://www.hamsterwelfare.com/>

Hamster Rescue & Rehoming UK (Facebook): <https://m.facebook.com/groups/3815928811804329/?ref=share>

Cozy Paws Hamster Care (Facebook): <https://m.facebook.com/groups/411534677824922/?ref=share>

Hamster Care UK Plus (Facebook): <https://m.facebook.com/groups/966258487759386/?ref=share>

Hamster Info Ireland: <https://hamsterinfoireland.ie/>

The Ethical Hamster Care Guide: <https://the-ethical-hamster-care-guide.mozellosite.com>