

Hamster Litter Training Concerns

How do you litter train a hamster and what about litter safety?

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Q: How do I successfully train my hamster (6-week-old baby) to use his corner potty? He seems to use it to pee in, but he poops in more than one place and sometimes in the potty; this is after two weeks of having him. Also, must I use the tiny grain scooping litter sold in pet stores only, or can I save money by using clumping litter used for cats (maybe it can be ground into smaller pieces)? Finally, is it OK if he nibbles the litter sometimes, or is it dangerous?

A: Hamsters may think of poop as food, and there isn't much you can do about that. Food is "treasure," so they may not want to put it in their toilet. If your hamster is peeing where you want him to that is a good thing, as it makes controlling urine odor easier. You can scoop out the urine-soaked area every few days and save the full cage cleaning for once a week.

Clean children's play sand (available at most hardware stores) is cheaper than other litters and will discourage your hamster from eating it. Clay-based litter can be dangerous to hamsters if eaten.

In time your hamster may figure out you are emptying the potty, and begin to move old poop there and put other "junk" in there as well. At that point, you may be able to stop using litter altogether, using just his regular bedding (Aspen, CareFresh, etc.) for his potty area as well.

If he doesn't ever settle on one potty spot, it shouldn't cause any problems for him. It will just extend your cleaning time a few minutes.

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