

Hamster Fun Outside The Cage

Try some of these out-of-cage options with your hamster.

By Audrey Pavia

Posted: April 2, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Watching a hamster is entertaining in its own right, but hamsters can also be fun outside their cage. Once it's accustomed to being handled, a hamster can come out of its cage and interact with you in a hamster-proof area. Besides being fun, the chance to play and interact with people outside its cage is important for a hamster's well-being.

Hand-tamed hamsters enjoy being cuddled. Be careful not to squeeze too hard! A hamster will also enjoy climbing on you.

When you hold a hamster, be sure you're sitting on the ground or are holding the small animal over a tabletop. Hamsters are known to make sudden leaps, and a fall to the ground could injure or even kill them. If your hamster tries to squirm away from you or bites you, it's probably tired of being held. Put it back in its cage, and make a note not to hold it quite as long next time.

An exercise ball is another great way for a hamster to play outside its cage. Inside the ball, a hamster can have fun and be safe from household dogs and cats, although supervision is still required. Limit play in the ball to no more than 15 or 20 minutes, and then give the hamster a chance to eat and drink.

When you play with a hamster outside its cage, be sure the room you're in doesn't have any hazards, such as electrical cords, toxic plants or small spaces where the hamster could squeeze in and hide. A clean bathroom with a closed door is a good place to play with a hamster. Be sure the toilet lid is down so the animal doesn't accidentally go for a swim.

You can also purchase a hamster playpen to ensure that the hamster stays confined in a particular area. The playpen should be larger than the hamster's cage, so your pet has more room to run and explore. Place some toys and tunnels inside the playpen to make it interesting.

Most importantly, supervise carefully so the hamster doesn't escape. You might want to cover the playpen with a fine mesh screen to prevent an escape. Keep other animals out of the room during the hamster's playtime. Even if the hamster is safely confined, the presence of other animals could be stressful.

Think Like A Hamster

If the unthinkable happens and the hamster gets loose, think like a hamster to improve your chances of getting it back safely. Start the search near the hamster's cage. If you're lucky, it won't be far away. Look on the floor behind furniture, underneath furniture and between sofa and chair cushions.

Hamsters can climb, and they like to hide in small, dark places, so look inside drawers, on bookshelves, inside boxes — including shoe boxes or tissue boxes — and inside boots or shoes. Don't ignore a spot simply because you think it's too small for a hamster to hide in. You never know what they can squeeze into or under.

If your search fails, leave the cage open and place the hamster's favorite food near it and inside it. Turn the light out or wait until dark to see if the hamster shows up. You may also want to set out some food and surround it with flour. If your hamster finds the food, its tracks may lead you to its hiding place.