

Share Table Foods With Your Hamster

Fresh foods are important to a hamster's daily diet.

By Audrey Pavia

A well-balanced diet for a hamster includes more than just seed mix or pellets. Fresh foods from your own kitchen are important as well. They provide variety and add interest to the hamster's meals. Foods that can be added to a hamster's diet include fruits and meats. Not every food is beneficial for hamsters, however. Here's what to know about giving fresh food to hamsters.

Fruits & Vegetables

Fruits hamsters can eat include apples, bananas and raisins. Other fruits hamsters are known to enjoy are pears, strawberries, mangoes and honeydew melon.

Fruit is healthy, tastes good, and gives a hamster something tasty to chew on. It should be given only in small amounts (about a teaspoon), and no more than once or twice a week. Too much fruit can cause diarrhea. If this happens, withhold fresh food until the diarrhea clears up, and make sure the hamster drinks plenty of water to prevent dehydration. Reintroduce fresh foods gradually and in smaller amounts.

Avoid giving apples, bananas, corn and carrots to dwarf hamsters. These fruits and vegetables are high in sugar and can contribute to the development of diabetes, which is common in the dwarf species.

Protein Sources

Hamsters also enjoy a bit of protein now and then. In the wild, they're known to eat small insects such as crickets and mealworms. If you're not squeamish, give your hamster a cricket or mealworms as a treat once in a while. Hamsters will also eat a little plain boiled chicken or a bit of fish. Avoid highly spiced meats.

It's sometimes believed that giving a hamster meat will cause it to eat its young (cannibalism), but that's not correct. Cannibalism tends to occur when a female doesn't have enough resources to provide food and water for her babies or if the offspring appear to be unhealthy. Hamsters may also kill and eat each other if their environment is noisy, crowded, unclean or otherwise stressful.

Table Foods To Avoid

Not every food is safe or healthy for hamsters. Fruits and vegetables that are overly ripe or that have a high water content can cause diarrhea. Sugary and fatty foods are high in calories and cause obesity. Sticky foods or foods with sharp edges can cause obstructions in or injuries to the pouch. And some foods are toxic, causing illness or even death.

Avoid giving a hamster the following foods:

Apple seeds

Raw beans

Candy or chocolate

Garlic and onions

Fast food such as hamburgers, fried chicken and French fries

Leaves or greens that have been exposed to pesticides or other toxic substances

Parsley

Sprouting potato buds or raw potatoes

Rhubarb

Green parts of tomatoes