

**CODE OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
WELFARE OF PET HAMSTERS**

**DUTY OF CARE TO A PET HAMSTER UNDER THE
ANIMAL WELFARE (GUERNSEY) ORDINANCE, 2012**

Section 8 of the Animal Welfare (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2012 provides that the owner or keeper of an animal owes a duty to take such care as, in all circumstances, is reasonable to see that the animal is free –

- from thirst, hunger and malnutrition,
- from discomfort,
- from pain, injury and disease,
- from fear and distress, and
- to express normal behaviour patterns.

In determining what care is reasonable in all the circumstances described above, the owner or keeper of an animal shall have particular regard to -

- (a) good practice for the care of the animal in question,
- (b) any lawful purpose for which the animal is kept,
- (c) any lawful activity carried on in relation to the animal,
- (d) the physical activity undertaken by the animal,
- (e) seasonal climatic conditions,
- (f) the life-stage of the animal, and
- (g) any special or additional dietary and nutritional requirements that may arise -
 - (i) where the animal is pregnant, brooding or rearing young, and

- (ii) from the general state of health of the animal.

"**normal behaviour patterns**" means normal behaviour patterns for a domestic animal or a captive animal, as the case may be, of the kind concerned.

The duty of care includes providing the animal with -

- (a) a supply of fresh drinking water and food of sufficient quantity and quality to keep the animal in good health,
- (b) where appropriate, suitable shelter which is sufficient to maintain the animal in good health and such shelter must include -
 - (i) access from the shelter to water and food,
 - (ii) sufficient space for the animal to lie down or otherwise rest in comfort, and
 - (iii) where appropriate, adequate light, heat and ventilation,
- (c) protection from injury, disease or unnecessary suffering including, where appropriate, providing timely and appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment where necessary by a recognised veterinary surgeon, and
- (d) the opportunity to express normal behaviour patterns and living conditions that are conducive to maintaining those normal behaviour patterns.

The Welfare Recommendations below provide practical guidance on meeting this duty of care when caring for a pet hamster.

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE UNDER SECTION 13(1) OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE (GUERNSEY) ORDINANCE, 2012 FOR THE WELFARE OF PET HAMSTERS

A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE WELFARE RECOMMENDATIONS MAY BE RELIED UPON IN COURT AS TENDING TO ESTABLISH LIABILITY FOR FAILING TO MEET THE DUTY OF CARE

RECOMMENDATIONS – FOOD AND WATER

1. A hamster should be provided with food that contains the correct balance of essential nutrients, in sufficient quantity to keep it, in all circumstances, in good health and vigour.
2. A hamster should be provided with fresh, clean water in sufficient quantity to keep it, in all circumstances, hydrated.

RECOMMENDATIONS - LIVING ENVIRONMENT

3. As a minimum a hamster should be provided with living accommodation that–
 - a. provides an enclosed space that is large enough to allow it to rest or sleep in a natural position and for it to hoard food and have a separate space for it to exercise,
 - b. is predator and vermin proof, dry, ventilated, but protected from draughts and which provides protection from direct sunlight and extremes of heat and cold,
 - c. has a solid base,
 - d. provides predictable daylight or a light period equivalent to daylight in every 24 hour period,

- e. allows continuous access to water and appropriate access to food (to ensure it receives a sufficient quantity of food as required to meet the duty of care), and
 - f. is constructed from materials that are not hazardous to hamsters.
4. Living accommodation should be provided with dust-free nesting and bedding material and bedding material should cover the floor of the accommodation. Nesting and bedding material must not have been treated with substances which are hazardous to a hamster's health.
5. A hamster should be kept indoors.

RECOMMENDATIONS - HEALTH

6. A hamster that is injured or ill should be provided with timely and appropriate treatment for the injury or illness or in the case of a serious injury or illness, medical diagnosis and treatment by a veterinary surgeon. In the case of doubt, advice should be obtained from a veterinary surgeon.
7. Veterinary medicines or treatments should only be administered in accordance with the directions of a veterinary surgeon or a person authorised to supply such products, or in the case of products that can be purchased by the general public, in accordance with the directions of the manufacturer of the product.
8. A hamster should be provided with protection from temperatures that exceed 26°C.
9. Hazardous substances should be kept out of the areas to which a hamster normally has access and aerosol sprays should not be used in the vicinity of its accommodation.
10. A hamster should be provided with untreated wood or twigs to gnaw on to prevent its teeth from becoming overgrown.
11. A hamster should be handled so as to avoid distress or injury.

12. Food and water containers that are provided for a hamster should be kept clean of waste food, droppings and other contamination.
13. A hamster should be protected from hazardous household appliances by keeping such appliances out of the areas to which it normally has access or by using measures to ensure it does not suffer harm from the appliances.

RECOMMENDATIONS - BEHAVIOUR

14. A hamster is generally nocturnal and should not be woken regularly or for prolonged periods during daylight hours.
15. Only social species of hamster should be housed together and care should be taken to ensure the individuals are compatible. If fighting occurs, hamsters should be provided with individual accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS - BREEDING

16. Only a hamster that is adult, well developed, in good health and condition and with a favourable temperament should be used for breeding.
17. Male and female hamsters should be separated after breeding.
18. If birth has not taken place by the morning of the eighteenth day of pregnancy, veterinary advice should be sought promptly.

RECOMMENDATIONS - TRANSPORTATION

19. A hamster should be transported in a secure container that contains nesting material and provides ventilation. It should be provided with a source of water in hot conditions and on extended journeys, with food and a source of water.
20. A hamster should not be left unattended in a vehicle unless the environment within the vehicle is maintained below 26°C air temperature in the shade.

Further, more detailed guidance for the welfare of pet hamsters is set out in "Guidance for the Welfare of Pet Hamsters" issued by the Commerce and Employment Department and available on the States of Guernsey website. That guidance does not form part of this Code.