

Information, Suggestions, and Next Steps for New Breeders

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There are quite a few considerations for breeding hamsters. Here we will go over these topics:

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Reason for Breeding

There are many reasons people start breeding hamsters. Some common reasons are to make a profit, to provide pets for family, friends, and local pet stores, and simply because they love animals. The issue with these reasons is that breeding truly puts undue risk to the animals' lives. In order to be considered ethical, the potential benefit to the species and the community must outweigh that risk.

For that reason, the *most important tenet* of an ethical breeder is the reason behind their choice to breed hamsters. It is the belief of this community that the only acceptable reasons to breed are: to further the species, to contribute to the community, and to help set a better standard of care for hamsters everywhere. By adhering to this reasoning, the potential risk to the individual animal is, hopefully, outweighed by their contribution to their species.

With all this said, the hope is that if you are reading this document, you are not breeding already. The best breeders are those who are brought up through the community and whose journey begins with dedicated research. If you are breeding, it is likely without quality stock from folks that also adhere to these tenets. As difficult as it will be, it is our recommendation that you stop your breeding program to learn, and start over fresh when you are ready.

Important Considerations

Cost

As stated, a common reason that people start breeding is to make profit. It is truly impossible to make money if you are breeding ethically. At best, you will be breaking even, but most breeders agree that they lose money. This is part of their dedication to the species that they are breeding, and part of their personal contribution to the community at large. Let's go further into some specific cost considerations.

Start-Up Costs

This will depend heavily on your space, planned number of breeding animals, and personal preferences. Caging can be as simple or elaborate as you want, as long as it meets

the size minimum put forth by the [code of ethics](#), currently 600 square inches, provides an appropriate wheel, and offers adequate mental stimulation. For simplicity sake, let's assume simple cages for 10 animals as a basic idea. This is based on the lowest cost product that is still recommended.

One time costs

Sterilite 50 gallon stacker bins , 10	\$400
Hardware mesh , zip ties , and basic tools for bins	\$100
Kaytee 12" Comfort Wheels , 10	\$230
Water bottles , 10	\$30
Igloo hides , 10	\$70
Food bowls (many options), 10	\$10+
Additional toys of your choice	\$200+
Total	\$1040

Recurring Costs

Aspen bedding	\$55
Paper bedding	\$75
Mazuri Rat and Mouse blocks	Varies, but around \$35/50lbs
Higgin's Sunburst seed mix	\$9/2.5lbs

The frequency of these purchases will vary, and you may choose one type of bedding that you prefer. Regardless, this amount of bedding and Mazuri is purchased around every 2-3 months, and this amount of Sunburst is a weekly expense on average.

Vet Visits

A very important expense will be vet visits. Hamsters neither receive gestational care nor receive vaccinations or newborn check ups. While this makes breeding hamsters less expensive than other mammals, there are still many expenses. It is recommended to have a veterinary fund of no less than \$2,000. That might seem like overkill. However, it is not at all uncommon for one emergency to reach well over 4 figures. Here is an example from Julianna of Strong Brew Hamstery:

In 2016 we had a female experience dystocia (pup stuck in vaginal canal) which caused severe haemorrhaging. Through quick action, we got her to the emergency vet and booked an emergency spay. Shockingly she made it through the surgery. Only one of her eleven pups pulled through. Just the surgery and care alone was \$1100.

Of course, it is key that your entire fund is not wiped out at once, since emergencies can pop up any time. You will want to price out the cost of an exam and euthanasia at your preferred local veterinarian. Normal ranges for exam is between \$40-\$80 (some clinics charge extra for pocket pets) and euthanasia is typically between \$100-\$200. Finding a vet will be addressed in this document too!

Import

Depending on your location, it's likely you are not extremely close to another breeder. If this is true, you will need to plan to import hamsters to your hamstery at some point. Even folks

that live in reasonable proximity will need to import breeding animals to prevent severe inbreeding over time!

Hamsters cannot be shipped via ground, and can only be shipped via air. They are booked as pet cargo, and require special shippers to do so. The mortality rate is low, and it is quite safe. However, these are added costs and easily cost \$500 for shipping alone, depending on the flight. This does not include the cost of animals to the breeder.

It's also important to note that international shipping is possible, but typically only as a group. This is why it's paramount to be part of a larger team of breeders, to help coordinate international shipping. It also brings the cost down! Depending on the number of animals, cost of flight and inspections, cost of individual animals, and many other factors, international import costs \$1000+

Location

Proximity

As touched on in the "import" section, being close to another breeder is very useful for sharing animals. Take note that "close" is a bit relative. It's rather common for folks to take lengthy cross-state trips in order to work together and share stock.

Besides the stock considerations, it's also extremely useful to be close to an established breeder (or at least in the same time zone!) for assistance and guidance. That person will put a lot of time into helping you and it's very helpful when they are somewhat close by.

Veterinary Access

Prior to breeding, it is crucial to have contact with a quality rodent vet. Once you find a vet you trust, it's important to have conversations with them about their expertise, opinion, and availability in working with you. This is crucial to having a working relationship!

Likewise, you will want to source a 24-hour emergency veterinarian that sees hamsters, at least for the purpose of providing basic care/euthanasia when needed.

Need of the Area

The need of your area is a huge determining factor in your availability to breed. Some areas are already overpopulated with hamsters, so if you are planning to breed, you will also need to do some advocacy work to ensure you are not contributing to the problem. Some areas are not well-educated on modern hamster care, and it is difficult to find clients willing to drive some distance or pay higher than pet store prices. Determining interest will be really helpful in finding an ethical balance in terms of number of animals and litters, price, and adoption requirements.

Time

Study

We recommend taking approximately 2 years to properly study genetics, plan hamstery needs, and build necessary relationships. During this time it's advised to connect with other ethical breeders (we will help you!) and contribute to the community.

Care

As discussed, this is not a career, but a passion project. The hours we put into this work are unpaid, but innumerable. Do plan for this hobby to be time-consuming between animal care tasks, late-night breeding sessions, litter rearing and taming, conversing with adopters, planning, and working with the community. It is quite consuming. For this reason, it's hopeful that you plan to stay in the hobby for at least the foreseeable future.

Next Steps

Rescue

Starting with rescue hamsters is an excellent way to get used to caring for a larger population of hamsters, familiarizing yourself with common medical issues, and finding suitable homes. I (Tony; I run Tiny Tracks Rescue) would be happy to help you with this, so just sent a mail to CHA!

Connections

If all of these suggestions are amenable to you, it's time to get connected to some breeders for more specific assistance.

- We have a new discord server for folks to connect with some of the best breeders in North America. [Please apply to join us here!](#)
- Facebook Groups we recommend:
 - [HAMSTERS](#) - general hamster group for familiarizing yourself with providing education to novices. Also a great opportunity to practice color ID!
 - [Ethical Hamster Breeders](#)
 - [Syrian Hamster Genetics + Ethical Breeding](#)
- Follow Quality Breeders
 - [Strong Brew Hamsters](#)
 - [Cheeks and Squeaks Hamsters](#)
 - [Happy Paws Hamsters](#)
 - [Hubba Hubba Hamstery](#)
 - [Poppy Bee Hamstery](#)
 - [Pearl Hamletry](#)
 - [Misty Beach Hamsters](#)
 - [Silversage Hamstery](#)
 - [Elevage Petit Princes](#)
 - [Cloverline Hamstery](#)
- Private chat
 - We have a number of private chats with great breeders. You will be asked to join these once you get familiar in the community!

Continuing with CHA

Please reach out with any questions or concerns at any time! These are meant to be suggestions, and we are definitely open to many different perspectives. You will also catch us in the above groups.

Best of luck and we look forward to working with you!