

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE POSITION STATEMENT

THE RSPCA HAS CONCERNS OVER THE USE OF HAMSTER BALLS AS THEY MAY CAUSE THE HAMSTER STRESS AND HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE INJURY.

Offering animals the opportunity to exercise is important. Inactivity can cause obesity which can lead to very serious health and welfare problems and can also reduce the length of a pet's life.

The hamster ball is an exercise device for hamsters. The hamster is enclosed in the ball and can then exercise/run in the ball which then rolls around on the floor. There are concerns that such products may, in fact, be stressful for hamsters and so the RSPCA does not recommend their use.

WELFARE CONCERNS

- Because hamsters' sight is very poor, the senses of touch, smell and hearing are vital means of exploring their environment. Being enclosed in an exercise ball could restrict the hamster's use of these senses and could compromise his/her ability to gain information about the environment, which is likely to be very stressful for the hamster.
- Whilst in the exercise ball the hamster will have no control over its environment and will be unable to access any resources he/she may need- for example food, water, bedding/ nest area. This may prevent the hamster from being able to perform natural behaviours and could cause considerable stress.
- It is also likely to be extremely stressful for the hamster should the exercise ball collide with other objects; for example, furniture.
- There is potential risk of injury to the hamster's paws and/or legs if pinched or caught in the air holes in the exercise ball.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hamsters need a lot of room (especially at night), so buy as large a cage as you can to allow generous space for your hamster(s) at all times. A larger cage will also enable you to provide suitable enrichment (such as small boxes and tubes – for example, inner cores from toilet rolls – and wooden chew blocks).

There is the potential for your hamster(s) to enjoy supervised opportunities to explore outside of their cage when they are awake too. Supervise your pet(s) closely to make sure that they don't stray. It's a good idea to provide a rodent exercise pen to help you keep them safe while they exercise and explore. You can put suitable objects in the pen that your hamster(s) can hide in, chew and play with too. Do not disturb your hamster(s) when they are sleeping though and never mix unfamiliar animals for the purpose of exercising them.

If you have another pet such as a dog or cat, keep them away from your hamster(s). Never leave a hamster out of their cage unattended or overnight.

If you are concerned about your hamster's health or behaviour, you should seek advice from your vet.





Hamster Balls

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OTHER POSSIBLE LINKS:

[Animal welfare act webpage](#)

[Welfare needs information for hamsters](#)

[Find a vet webpage](#)

Links to the web pages of other organisations are provided for additional information only and do not imply any endorsement by the RSPCA of those organisations or of any content on the website.

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