

HAMSTER

CRICETUS CRICETUS

DISTINGUISHING MARKS:

Hamster has black stomach to separate it from all other European small rodents. Body length is 18-30 cm, tail 28-70 mm and weight up to 500 g.

PREVALENCE:

Prevalence area reaches from the steppes and prairies of southern Russia to Central Europe. In many cultivation regions species has declined very quickly during the last decades.

HABITAT:

Prairie is the original habitat of the hamster. From there species has accustomed to live in different grass lands, among other in the cultivation areas. It favours loess and clay soil, to the which it is easy to dig cavities, but in which pathways don't easily block.

LIFE STYLES:

Hamster lives in extensive underground corridor networks, which reach even to 2 m deep and in which each animal has its own pathway and nest chamber. Hamster is a nocturnal animal. Winter sleep starts and ends when outside temperature reaches +10 degree, but hamster's doze is not uninterrupted. At times animal goes on its food stores and takes a short walk.

NOURISHMENT:

Hamster eats both cultivated and natural plants such as grain, corn, fodder plants, beets, fruits and vegetables. Furthermore hamster feeds with insects and other little animals. In the summer and autumn it transports food to the underground storages in its very stretchy cheek bags. Even potato caches of 65 kg have been found.

BREEDING:

Mating time starts in April immediately when winter sleep ends and in May -August 1-3 litters are born, which has each 3-15 cubs. Female becomes family mature already in 2,5 months of age.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Special features of the species are colourful general impression, short tail and hissing and peeping noises made by an irritated or accelerated animal.

AS A PETS:

Hamsters have been popular pets for long. They become tame easily, when they are treated always gently and cautiously.

