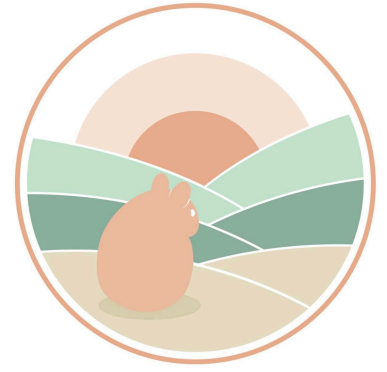


BRIGHT HORIZON HAMSTER RESCUE

CARE GUIDE



Roborovski's Dwarf Hamster

Phodopus roborovskii

ABOUT US

Roborovskis (robos) are the smallest species of hamster kept in captivity. Known as Desert Hamsters in some parts of the world, they originate from the sandy regions of Central Asia. They are completely adapted for desert life.

You can find out more about their wild habits here, but here are some quick facts <https://animalia.bio/roborovski-hamster#description>

Average size:	45-50mm
Average weight:	20-25g
Waking cycle:	Crepuscular (most active at dawn and dusk)
Lifespan:	2-3 years
Diet:	Omnivore (robos need more protein than other captive species)
Homes:	Deep burrows, up to 2m in the wild

ROBOS AS COMPANIONS

Robos are naturally shy, but can be very sociable with humans they trust. In their habitat - open sandy plains - they are prey, and they are evolved to run fast, and hide quickly. Convincing a robo that you are not an eagle is a process that takes patience, but it's incredible feeling when you succeed. Bright Horizon's "robo whisperers" give their taming tips below!

A lot of the robos that find their way into rescues arrive with lifelong trauma: tiny, unsuitable cages, rough handling/chased, nowhere near enough burrowing substrate, bullied by a cagemate, and either over or underfed. A few will always be "look-don't-touch", but of all the captive species, they're the most fun to watch - and very, very cute!

To be friends with your robo, you need to first create them a living space in which they feel safe, secure, able to fulfil their natural instincts and thrive. Once they feel at home, their fear will fade and they'll start to be curious about human activities.

We'll help you make your robo's home completely suited to their needs, but first, let's bust some myths.



ROBOS MUST NOT LIVE TOGETHER IN CAPTIVITY

This is an inarguable fact, often ignored by breeders, pet shop sellers and owners, with tragic results.

In the wild, robos have infinite space to get away from each other. They can live in loose groups of up to 20, with one breeding pair, but fights for dominance are an everyday thing, and the losers eventually leave the group.

In captivity, robos can't escape each other: one will be dominant, and eventually bully the other away from resources until they suffer or starve, and/or seriously injure them. We have seen this countless times, and dealt with fatal injuries.

MATING

Robos are harder to sex than other species (we can share details if you're interested but we'll spare you if you're not!).

They're habitually missexed by pet sellers, and accidental litters are common. Robos are sexually mature at 5 weeks, will breed with their direct family, and can become pregnant again within hours of giving birth. Rescues are constantly dealing with situations where robos are breeding out of control.

Robos are also capable of "holding" a pregnancy: their uninterrupted gestation period is 21-22 days, but a robo who becomes pregnant immediately after giving birth can delay their pregnancy until the current litter have weaned. They are also able to delay a pregnancy if they do not feel safe to give birth in their current environment.

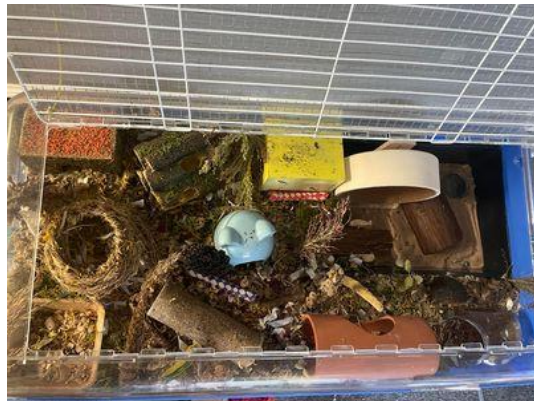
Bright Horizon hold all female robos in foster until 40 days have passed since they were rescued, after a "virgin" litter was born days after an adoption! We're trying to encourage other rescues to do the same, and we have some research if anyone is curious.

SMALL HAMSTER, SMALL SPACE?

The complete opposite.

In nature, robos hold the largest territories of any of the dwarf hamster species, and most of the larger species! They can run up to 10km in 24 hours, and forage for food over a wide and fairly barren, arid area. They patrol their territories many times a day, harvesting resources and defending the perimeter. If they're aware (by scent) of rival robos nearby, they will patrol more frequently.

Robos need at least 100 x 50cm of unbroken floorspace, just like all other captive hamsters.



HOW DO I CREATE A PERFECT ROBO ENCLOSURE?

The minimum requirements, and a little more detail:

100 x 50cm+ enclosure: bigger is ALWAYS better.

Barless highly recommended, or under 7mm bar width, with screening so the bedding can be deep

21cm+ wheel with a good bearing - they are FAST!

Sand in at least 25% of the enclosure: this replicates their natural environment and they love bathing, digging and rolling in it

At least 30% deep burrowing substrate (30cm minimum): robos build deep and complex underground burrows

Substrate that holds tunnels: a mix of soft (eg: Kaytee), Megazorb and hemp (eg: Aubiose) holds burrows perfectly

Multiple hides/clutter: robos don't stay out in the open a lot and feel safest where they know they can easily shelter

A varied, optimal diet: we can help you to get this right - protein is essential for robos

BONDING TIPS FROM THE BRIGHT HORIZON FOSTER TEAM

“Be still and quiet and hold a treat in their enclosure until they take it. They will soon associate you with something tasty!”

“Taming robos is the most rewarding process They don't need you like the other species so if they choose you just know how special you truly are”

“Never known a robo who doesn't love sunflower seeds!”

“Keep a treat pot by their cage so when you see them they can treat them straight away”

“Don't give up just because they run off the first few times. That's instinctive. Talk to them and get them used to you being right there”

“Try not to come in from above. That's what predators do”

“Robos are slow to wake up, so if they're sleepy, they don't just automatically run off as much”

“Keep the foods they love out of their scatter/forage and reserve them for human interactions”

“If they feel safe on their wheel, get to know them on their terms while they're sitting there”

“MEALWORMS”.