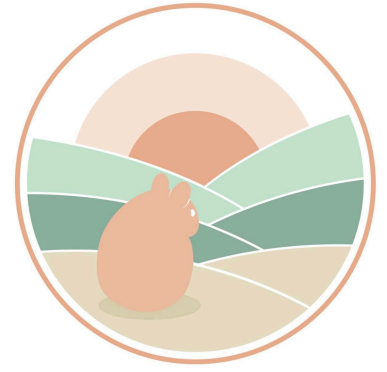


## BRIGHT HORIZON HAMSTER RESCUE CARE ESSENTIALS



# TORPOR

## SHOULD HAMSTERS HIBERNATE? THE ANSWER IS NO.

When hamsters become too cold for too long, they can fall into **TORPOR**, a very dangerous state. Torpor is involuntary, unlike hibernation; animals don't choose to go into torpor, and have no control over it.

Long ago in their evolution, hibernation will have been a part of their yearly cycle (just as they once had long tails). This has left genetic code behind, which can still trick their body into a dormant state. Technically, hamsters are capable of hibernation, but at their current place in evolution, it isn't safe.

Torpor occurs when an animal enters a light state of sleep, due to environmental conditions or a lack of food. For hamsters, this is commonly because the temperature in their environment falls below 15c for a period of time.

Captive hamsters are no longer able to navigate out of torpor, as they would do in nature. This makes torpor a very real risk for hamsters whose humans live in colder climates.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

A hamster experiencing torpor will appear to be in a deep sleep, and may even appear to have passed, until their internal body heat returns to normal levels. Their body may feel cooler to the touch.

## HOW DO I PREVENT TORPOR?

Keep the room the hamster lives in above 15c at all times

Ensure the room is free of draughts, air vents or open windows during colder times

Prevent cold air from blowing into their enclosure from any source

Avoid significant temperature fluctuations, even in the +15c range

NEVER take your hamster outside

## IF YOU THINK YOUR HAMSTER MAY BE IN TORPOR:

Take **IMMEDIATE** action.

**CHECK FOR LIFE:** Even if they don't respond to touch, they may be slowly breathing or have a faint heartbeat. You may see their whiskers twitching. If you are able to move their limbs, the hamster is in torpor. If their limbs are stiff, *rigor mortis* has set in and the hamster has passed.

**WARM THEM UP GENTLY:** They will need help to get their body temperature back to normal. They need to warm up **GRADUALLY**: if they warm up quickly, they can go into shock. Move to a warmer room and wrap a blanket around them so that their body heat is trapped inside. You can help transfer some of your body heat to them. A heat pad can help if you don't place them directly onto it.

**REORIENTATE THEM:** Your hamster can be confused coming out of torpor. Help them locate both food and water. As they acclimatise, try to work out what the causes were and how to prevent it happening again.

*Credit: Hamster Care Central/discord*