



Chapter 036, The European Hamster (American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine)

Mark Suckow

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NOTE: This is a single chapter excerpted from the book *The Laboratory Rabbit, Guinea Pig, Hamster, and Other Rodents*, made available for individual purchase. Additional chapters, as well as the entire book, may be purchased separately.

This chapter studies the history, management, behavior, and the research utility of the European hamster, which is known as *Cricetus cricetus*. It has a chromosome diploid number 22. European hamsters are the largest of all hamsters, bearing a size resemblance to the guinea pig, and their bodies are yellow-red brown to grayish brown on the dorsal and lateral surfaces. European hamsters are well acclimated to the laboratory setting and though they are naturally very aggressive, those in captivity show slightly reduced aggression to their kind and to man. They are not typical nocturnal rodents because they are active only during the dark cycle with limited or no seasonal differences in activity. The European hamster is not a widely used research laboratory animal. It was first used in the study of thermoregulation and hibernation and was later developed as a research model when it was found to have bronchogenic squamous cell carcinoma. The majority of biomedical research using the European hamster is in the field of chronobiology and involves study of hibernation, circadian rhythm, and circannual cycles.

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