



Hamsters - favourite pets in China

The Year of the Rat began on 7 February 2008, and hamsters are the most popular pets in China.

Pet shop owners say stocks are **running out**.

The price is about 30 yuan (\$4.20, £2.10) per **hamster** across the country. It is three times the usual price.

"Rats and mice have a bad image, but hamsters are gentle. You can **hold** them in your hand and play with them," the Xinhua News Agency reported.

According to pet shop owners, there is also new interest in other similar animals, such as chinchillas and **squirrels**.

One father told the media: "I've always wanted to buy my son a small animal, and a hamster is an ideal choice.

"By bringing up a pet, my son will learn about compassion and caring for animals."

But there is a risk. Rodents have **sharp** teeth and can deliver a nasty **bite**.

Some could even carry the rabies virus.

(Adapted for educational purposes from news.bbc.co.uk)

(Photo from news.bbc.co.uk)

Writing exercise "My favourite pet is ..."

Write a short paragraph about your favourite little animal friend. Explain why you think it is your ideal pet and describe its advantages and disadvantages.

Reading Comprehension Exercise

Read the text above, then answer the following questions:

1. Why are hamsters China's favourite pets at the moment?
2. How much does a hamster cost?
3. Is a hamster cheap?
4. What other animals do Chinese children prefer?
5. Are there any disadvantages in having a rodent as a pet?