

**From a secret report to the Hamster High Council from Agent CHB6201 (code name "Twiglet") :**

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AT MEERKAT MEADE, year 76 of the Great Wheel (1999, human style)

**Snowmonth:** Remaining active through the long nights. Humans provide shredded tissue & cedar chips for nest reconstruction project. Nightly devotions continue uninterrupted – Praise the Great Wheel!

**Huddlemonth:** Have made enormous progress in deciphering the human language. Operant conditioning experiments less successful, but I am training the large one to assist in my nightly grooming. Touch is strangely compelling. Report from our cousin in Punxsutawney is distressing, but we must not lose scent of our ultimate goals. May the Wheel be Praised!

**Leafmonth:** They definitely respond to hamster body language; I have been training them to bring food on command. No indication as yet that they are aware of our written language. Is possible that they have no sense of smell at all?

**Wetmonth:** Humans are mostly creatures of the day, but the one called "Thomas" is as nocturnal as any hamster. The one called "Don" seems intelligent; he responds well to training. I believe that "Renfield" is the Alpha Male in their society. He departs the nest most regularly, foraging by day & bringing home food.

**Clovermonth:** I have made a discovery which will revolutionize our impression of humans. **They know the Great Wheel!** Early one morning, I was foraging on the kitchen counter with Don & I was able to watch Renfield depart. He boarded a vehicle that *was clearly wheeled!* Humans, it seems, are not the uncultured barbarians we assumed.

**Sleepmonth:** Escape! Don was careless in securing the skyhouse lid. Fearful tumble (nearly seven hamster-lengths) but I was not hurt. Spent a night exploring the human habitat, even crawling inside the walls. Amazingly, the humans seemed distressed at my absence. Once I had gathered enough information (& determined that there was little food or water to be found), I took pity on them & returned to the floor below my main habitat. Thomas lifted me back to the skyhouse, & I nearly drained my water bottle in relief to be back in comfortable surroundings.

**Dewmonth:** Managed to escape again & completed my habitat inspection. This time, Thomas was there waiting for me.

**Berrymonth:** Have discovered a food fit for the Heavenly hamster Himself: mulberries. The humans gather them for me, & they can usually be coaxed to give me one or two a night. Ambrosia!

**Nutmonth:** No more mulberries. Have begun chewing my plastic cube in frustration. Had a nice hole chewed, big enough for a paw, then humans replaced the cube. Am redoubling my efforts. The Great Wheel's will be done!

**Tubermont:** Am nightly becoming more enchanted with these humans. They are most excellent pets.

**Fluffmonth:** Thomas & Don have become quite comfortable to have me run over their hands & arms. I live a dream life – food & water plentiful, enormous & comfortable habitat, intellectually challenging work, & three large creatures to do my bidding. Now, another human has entered the brood – a female named June. Hope to have her trained soon.

**Wheelmonth:** My research proves humans at least as intelligent as hamsters. While their sense of smell is rudimentary & their size unmanageable, they do have their charm. Humans invented many delectable treats, shredded wheat, dog biscuits, & tortilla chips among them. Human shedding is a copious & dependable source of all sorts of fluff, particularly a substance called "cotton," which is unrivaled for building warm nests.

Undeniably, humans know the Great Wheel &, after their own fashion, follow its precepts. They are, as much as we, the Great Wheel's creatures. In short, I do not believe that humans represent a threat to hamster-kind. I believe that our cousins were vastly mistaken 600 years ago when they attempted to wipe out humans with Operation Black Death. I urge the High Council to reject Operation Hantavirus & to recall the advance troops that have already been deployed. In the name of the Great Wheel's infinite mercy, this species should be spared.

In closing, I offer Season's Greetings to hamsters everywhere. Merry Wheelnight to all, & to all a good run!

**-Twiglet**