



Care of pet rats

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Rats are probably one of the most well-known Rodents worldwide and they make excellent pets. Sadly, these playful and interactive species have short lifespans (2.5-3 years).

Diet

Rats are omnivores and can be quite selective with their food. They also hoard so it can be difficult to know what's their actual food intake. Their diet should include:

- High quality rat pellets – this prevents rats from selecting food. They should be fed twice daily and any remaining food should be removed;
- Small daily amounts of fruit, vegetables, grains and nuts can also be offered.
- Treats – occasionally some insects like mealworms or a bit of porridge or hard boiled egg can be offered.

Fresh water should be available in bottles and/or bowls and changed daily

Housing

Female rats can be kept in pairs or small groups. Male rats can be kept similarly if introduced before puberty or if they are castrated.

Rats should be kept in fairly large cages (800 cm²/adult). The floor should be covered with wood chips or other plant-based substrate. Multiple hiding places, like nest boxes, hammocks, extra bedding material and climbing opportunities should always be available for added environmental enrichment. Wire cage floors should be avoided as they can hurt rats feet.

Rats should be kept below 25 °C and in relatively dry and well ventilated environments.

It is also important to provide extra exercise under supervision and plenty of play time because rats are very social animals.

Veterinary care

We advise that all rats should have the following **medical care**:

- Yearly health checks;
- Neutering surgery (castration) sometimes is advised for males;

Rats, as any prey animal, can hide they are unwell. There **are common signs of illness** and some conditions can be very common in pet rats. If your pet shows any of these, don't hesitate to contact us:

- Hair loss, skin crustiness and itchiness;
- Any lumps or masses – rats, specially females, are very prone to mammary gland cancer;
- Sneezing, nasal discharge or any respiratory signs – respiratory infections are very common in rats.