

Rat

Rattus norvegicus



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Rats have been kept as human companion animals for hundreds of years. Rats are intelligent, extremely social and enjoy human interaction. Rats are best kept in same-sex pairs.



Is a rat the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

- I have an appropriate location and space for a rat.
- I know that male and female rats should not be housed together.
- I will provide daily, supervised time for this rat outside the habitat.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this rat.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered, "Yes" to these statements, a rat may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a rat and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

Average Size 8 inches long

Life Span Up to 5 years with proper care

Diet High quality rat food/lab blocks

A healthy diet includes 80% dry food and 20% vegetables and fruit such as broccoli, kale, cooked sweet potatoes, grapes, and bananas

Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake

Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily

Do not feed chocolate, alcohol or caffeine as these can cause serious medical problems

Feeding Food and water should always be available

Small amounts of vegetables and fruits

Discard food if not eaten within 24 hours

Housing Rats acclimate well to average household temperatures; be cautious of extreme temperature changes; habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area

Habitat should be glass, plastic or metal, escape-proof with solid bottom; it is best to provide the largest habitat possible; rats love to climb so a tall habitat is recommended as it will allow you to create challenges for your rat

1–2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes hardwood shavings or pelleted or recycled product; cedar bedding may cause harm and is not recommended

Different types of small animals should not be housed together

Recommended Supplies

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriately sized habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle | <input type="checkbox"/> Nesting box |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-quality rat food | <input type="checkbox"/> Vitamins | <input type="checkbox"/> Chew sticks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about rats | <input type="checkbox"/> Treats | |

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Normal Behavior and Interaction

Commonly active during the night and rest during the day (nocturnal)
Hide in objects, but will come out when people come near the habitat
Chew on objects to maintain incisor teeth, which grow continuously; ensure have plenty of chew sticks available
Do not house male and female rats together

Habitat Maintenance

Remove wet spots daily; change bedding weekly or more often, as needed
Clean the habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and allow to dry completely before placing the rat back into the habitat

Grooming and Hygiene

Rats stay clean and do not need baths; clean with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipes, if necessary
Consult with a veterinarian if a rat's teeth or nails seem too long
Because all rats are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as Rat Bite Fever, always wash your hands before and after handling your rat and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of diseases.
Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a rat and should consider not having a rat as a pet. For more information regarding rats and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at <http://www.petco.com/pet care info/companion animal care sheets, Preventing Infectious Diseases in Small Animals>.

Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Active, alert, and sociable
- Healthy fur
- Clear eyes
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Communicates by squeaking
- Walks normally

Common Health Issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Diarrhea	Loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing or illness.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to determine cause and treatment.
Malocclusion	Overgrown teeth.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to possibly have teeth trimmed regularly.
Respiratory Disease	Sneezing, cough, red-colored discharge from eyes and nose.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.
Skin lesions	Abnormal lumps, sores on skin.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.

Red Flags

- Weight loss
- Distressed breathing
- Skin lesions
- Abnormal hair loss
- Lethargic
- Overgrown teeth
- Diarrhea or dirty bottom
- Eye or nasal discharge

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Sources

Choosing a Small Mammal by Dennis Kelsey-Wood
Rats by Susan Fox
The Proper Care for Fancy Rats by Nick Mays

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.