

Care & Information Sheet



Rats

Rats are very intelligent and social animals that enjoy human interaction. They are nocturnal animals so they are active at night and rest during the day. With proper care and nutrition they will live up to 5 years and can grow up to 8 inches long. Rats like to hide in objects but will come out when people come near the habitat. You should not house male and female rats together. They are best kept in same sex pairs.

Habitat

- As large as possible glass, metal cage, or plastic habitat. It should be escape proof and have a solid floor.
- Rats like to climb so a tall habitat is recommended.
- They will do well in the average household temperature. Avoid extreme temperature changes and you should never keep their habitat in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
- Clean the habitat and its contents at least once a week with mild soap and water, rinse, and allow it to dry completely before placing the rat back into the habitat.

Bedding

- 1–2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat.
- Proper bedding includes hardwood shavings and a pelleted or recycled product.
- Cedar-based products are not recommended as they may cause harm to your new pet.
- Wet bedding should be removed daily. Provide all new bedding once a week.

Food & Water

- High-quality rat food or lab blocks.
- Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake.
- Do not feed chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions.
- Small amounts of fruits & vegetables, broccoli, kale, grapes and bananas, can be offered as a treat but should be discarded if not consumed within 24 hrs.
- Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily.

Grooming and Hygiene

- Rats stay clean and do not need baths but can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipe if necessary.
- Chew sticks should always be provided to maintain healthy incisor teeth, which grow continuously. Consult a veterinarian if the rats teeth or nails seem too long.

Supplies

Habitat	Water Bottle	Treats
Bedding	Food Dish	Chew Sticks
Exercise Toys -Wheel	Quality Food	Book about Rats
Hiding Place	Vitamins	

Health

Because all rats are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your rat and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of diseases.

You should consult with an exotic animal veterinarian if you observe any of the following conditions.

- Diarrhea or loose stools - caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness.
- Respiratory Disease – sneezing, cough, red colored discharge from the eyes & nose.
- Malocclusion - Overgrown teeth which may need to be trimmed regularly.
- Mites - External parasites that cause the rat to lose patches of hair.

For information regarding rats and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets>

NOTE: The information contained in this document is for general reference only. Please consult a veterinarian for medical advice and concerns.

Sources:

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