



A Private Charity Since 1881

Rat Care Sheet

Care sheets provide basic information only. We recommend purchasing a book about your new pet, and seeing a local veterinarian for a wellness exam after adoption.

Basic Information

- Average adult size: 8 inches long, head to end of tail
- Average life span: 2 to 3 years with proper care
- Rats can be kept in same sex pairs or small groups if kept together from an early age. Rats can be kept individually but will require much more human interaction. If males and females are kept together, breeding or fighting may occur.
- Rats are primarily nocturnal; they are active during the night and sleep during the day. However, rats are very social and can adapt to your schedule.
- Always wash your hands after handling your pet, or cleaning its dishes, cage, toys, etc.

Diet & Feeding

- Fresh food and water should always be available. Most rats are accustomed to drinking from a water bottle.
- Specialized pellets or lab blocks should make up 90% of their diet, along with small amounts of fresh vegetables, fruits, and timothy hay. Many rats are used to a seed-heavy diet. They should be transitioned gradually onto a pellet food.
- Vegetables and fruits not eaten within a few hours should be discarded.
- Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water, changed daily.
- Do **not** feed avocado, chocolate, caffeine, or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions. Avoid sugar and high fat treats. Male rats should not be fed citrus fruits.

Housing

- Rats acclimate well to average household temperatures, not above 80°F. Avoid extreme temperature changes. The habitat should be placed off the floor in an area that is away from drafts.
 - A habitat approximately 24"W x 24"D x 24"H is the minimum size for a pair of rats. The habitat should be metal or glass with an escape proof solid bottom. It is best to provide the largest habitat possible.
 - 1-2" of paper bedding such as Carefresh is recommended. Wood shavings should not be used.
 - Clean and disinfect the habitat and non-porous toys regularly; remove wet spots daily and change bedding at least once a week or more often if necessary.
 - Provide a variety of chewable toys to promote proper teeth wear as rodent's teeth grow continuously throughout their life. Rats should also be given a place to hide.

Health

A healthy rat should be active, alert, and sociable, eating and drinking often, with healthy fur and clear eyes. A rat that is inactive, losing weight, has diarrhea, hair loss, or distressed breathing may be sick. If you notice these signs, discharge from the eyes or nose, or other problems, please see your veterinarian right away.