

Health Care

Please note that rats should never be picked up by their tails as they are too heavy and you may severely damage their tails.

Rats need hard objects to chew to keep their teeth short, clean and healthy. This provides valuable entertainment for them and satisfies their natural urge to gnaw. Flavoured salt and mineral lick stones and wood chews are the best items for this purpose.

Because of the different PH levels between Rats and human skin, human shampoo should never be used on your rat. Instead use a shampoo made specially for small animals to keep them smelling sweet! Shampoos that contain pesticides can make your rats ill, so always ensure you read the label thoroughly and if in doubt please ask one of our Small Animal Staff for assistance.

Most animals need regular worming and rats are no exception. Rats are easily wormed using a specially formulated sweet liquid which most of them enjoy. This is given 2 consecutive days every 3 months for life.

The most common ailments to afflict rats are two different types of parasite – lice and mites. Lice are a common parasite that live on rats, biting and irritating them (they are very similar to fleas on dogs or head lice on humans). Symptoms include constant itching, red skin, and a dull coat. They are easily treated by directly applying a spray or rinse. The cage and bedding should also be treated.

Treatment should be reapplied in 7 days to cover any lice eggs that may have hatched in that time. Repeat this until your cage is free of lice. This strain of lice is not contagious to humans.

Mites are a parasite that live under the skin. Symptoms of mites include constant scratching, red or scabby skin, lethargy and dull coat. Left untreated mites can cause death. They are best treated orally by a vet.

Treats

Below is a list of foods that are very good for rats, and some that are not so good. Some food and plants can be quite toxic to rats so if you are not sure whether a certain food is safe then it's best not to feed it!

THESE ARE GOOD FOR RATS!

Lettuce (sml amounts)	Parsley
Parsnips	Beans
Turnips	Cabbage (sml amounts)
Spinach	Cauliflower
Silverbeet	Cauliflower stalks
Beetroot	Fresh cut green grass
Watermelon	Nectarine
Rockmelon	Carrots
Cucumber	Hullsted or rolled oats
Choko	Bran
Tomato	Sunflower stalks and leaves
Apples	Apricot
Pumpkin	Weetbix
Strawberry	Cornflakes
Plum	Brown bread
Zucchini	Corn
Orange	Alfalfa
Banana	Lucerne (fresh & dried)

DO NOT FEED THESE !!

Rhubarb	Onions
Bulb plants of any type	Bleu Cheese
Raw Dry Beans	Onion grass
Liquorice	Raw red cabbage
Green bananas	Fizzy Drinks
Wild insects	Butter Cups
Human chocolate	
Potato tops & skins or any green parts	
Any unripe fruit or vegetables	

Pet City

RAT CARE SHEET

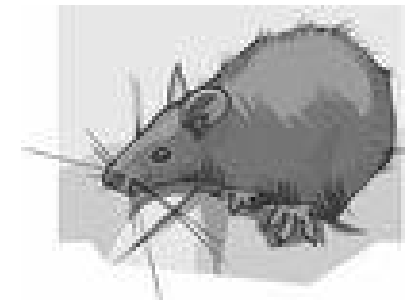
Rats make wonderful pets for both children and adults alike. They are interactive, fun to watch and relatively inexpensive to set up and maintain.

But just because they are small doesn't mean there isn't a lot to consider before adding one to your family.

Responsible pet ownership always involves a certain amount of planning, commitment, time and expense. So in all fairness to you and your pet, always do your homework first and learn as much as possible about the animal, including its requirements, health and behaviour.

At *Pet City* we do our best to ensure that your new pet is as healthy and happy as possible.

This brochure has been created by *Pet City* to give you some helpful tips and practical information for keeping Rats.



Cage Care

Rats need lots of space to play and explore. The size of the cage you select will depend on the number of rats you decide to keep, but bigger is always better for rats. Remember that rats are colonial animals that do best when they can interact with other rats. They enjoy group housing and socialization and for these reasons you should consider keeping a minimum of two rats. Rats should be kept with the same sex as they are prolific breeders.

Male rats tend to be more relaxed & placid by nature, whereas female rats are very active & inquisitive.

As their eyes are very sensitive to light, rats should always have a dark place to hide within their cage. Bright light can cause pain and eye damage to sensitive rat eyes, especially with albinos. Also note that rats are natural predators of mice, so if you keep both species you should house them in different rooms to avoid stressing your mice.

Cages with wire floors may cause sores on the soles of their feet, and are quite uncomfortable for rats to stand on. If your cage has a wire floor consider taking it out and using the cage base filled with soft bedding instead. Your rat always needs to have access to soft bedding in the cage. The best type of bedding for rat cages is made of recycled news paper. The highly absorbent pellets work to keep the cage smelling fresh. They are also soft on little feet!

It is important to note that if you are using a wood shaving bedding special care must be taken to avoid any scented or oiled types as these can cause respiratory problems.

The cage should be cleaned once or twice a week depending on the size of the cage and how many rats are kept in it. It is recommended an antibacterial cleansing spray is used to wipe down the cage. This will kill any germs and assist with eliminating smells. Be careful as cleansing agents that contain eucalyptus or menthol can kill your rat. Ensure that you rinse the cage well before putting your rats back in.

When introducing a new rat to your existing friend, it is a good idea to clean out the cage first making it a neutral smelling territory for all involved. This will help reduce any possible territorial disputes!

Feeding



As rats require a varied diet we recommend that you feed your rat a mixture of a good Small Animal Mix, and wild bird seed or small parrot seed. Note that any seed you give your rats must be free of shell grit. Your rat also needs a daily source of protein in their diet. This can easily be given to them in the form of dry dog or cat food biscuits, or *Pet City's* specially formulated Protein Berry Mix.

Alternatively you can feed a premium food such as "Lil'Friends" which has all their dietary requirements perfectly balanced and conveniently packaged.

Rats need a lot of water to fuel their fast metabolisms. Make sure they always have plenty of fresh water available, either in a heavy bowl that they cannot tip over or in a specially designed hanging water bottle. A water bottle is the best choice as they cannot soil in or contaminate the water. To prevent algae from building up in the water bottle you can use "Small Animal Water Guard Drops".

There are a wide range of commercial treats available for rats such as yoghurt drops and seed bars. Fresh fruit and vegetables also make nutritious treats. Make sure you never feed unripe fruit or vegetables though as these can be toxic to rats. You will soon notice that your rats have personal preferences for what they enjoy eating.

An excellent source of vitamins for rats is a vitamin supplement that can be added to their drinking water. Easy to administer and readily available "Aristopet Small Animal Vitamin Supplement" will help to ensure your pet is receiving the correct balance of vitamins. Salt and mineral lick stones placed in the cage can also be of benefit.

Some signs of vitamin deficiency are dull coat, lethargy, skin lesions, susceptibility to infection, and reluctance to walk.

If you have a rat that seems to show any of these signs it might be a good idea to review your pet's diet. In extreme cases please contact your vet for advice.

Entertainment

Rats are lively creatures and love to play! They have inquisitive minds and enjoy it when there are a variety of toys, tunnels and hanging objects in their cage to make their life more interesting. They get very excited when you rearrange their cage and rotate their toys.

Rats are very active and need lots of exercise. Wheels are not recommended for rats to play on as they can possibly dislocate their tails. Also most adult rats are too intelligent to be interested in them.

There are many modern cages on the market to choose from. Make sure you get one with ample space for your rats to run and play. Mouse cages are way too small!

Some cages such as *Pet City's* "Ferplast" range come with a wide variety of available attachments so you can rearrange and add to your cage on a regular basis.

There are many household items you can use to make fun tunnels, hide outs and mazes for your rat. You are limited only by your imagination!

Rat balls are another great source of exercise and entertainment, allowing the rats to enrich their lives by having freedom for a short time.

The transparent ball is brightly colored making it easy to see as they roll it around your house. The rats are secure in the ball, and its size it makes it impossible for them to get where they shouldn't (ie: behind the fridge, etc). Note that you should slowly get your rat used to its ball, making it a positive experience with lots of yummy treats and gradually building up the time that it stays inside.

