

Petware House

Your Neighborhood Pet Store

Rat

Rattus norvegicus

CARE SHEET



Rats have been domesticated for thousands of years. Rats are intelligent, extremely social and enjoy human interaction. Rats can be kept in same-sex pairs.

Average Size The average size of a rat is 8 inches in length. **Life span** up to 5 years.

Feeding Fresh food and water should always be available. Small amounts of vegetables and fruits can be given daily, such as pears, grapes, strawberries, dates, raisins, sprouts and carrots. Vegetable and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be thrown away.

Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake. Do not feed chocolate, alcohol or caffeine; these are dangerous.

Use a constant supply of high-quality rat food/lab blocks containing a minimum of 16-20% protein, 4% fat and a maximum of 18% fib

Housing Rats acclimate well to average household temperatures; be cautious of extreme temperature change; habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area. Habitat should be glass, plastic or metal, escape proof and with a solid bottom. A 15 gallon aquarium makes a good home for two rats. It is best to provide the largest habitat possible.

Rats love to climb, so if possible, a tall habitat will allow you to create challenges for your rat.

Different types of small animals should not be housed together.

Maintenance Remove wet spots daily; change bedding weekly or more often if needed and wash all items in the habitat. Clean the habitat once a week by scrubbing it with mild soap and water, rinse and allow to completely dry to minimize fumes before placing rats back into the habitat.

Temps Stable room temperature is adequate. No special requirements.

Humidity No special requirements

Lighting Rats are nocturnal, keep out of direct sunlight. Use room lighting as needed.

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WATER & ACCESSORIES

Rats should be given a sipper bottle, hung from the side of the cage. They also need small toys to play with and a running wheel for exercise. Keep a food bowl; chew stick and nesting house as well.

BASIC REPRODUCTIVE INFORMATION

It is recommended that the males and females should always live and play separately, and only meet for a planned mating. When the mom gives birth, she immediately goes into "post-partum estrus," and if a male is present she can get immediately pregnant again, which is not healthy for her, her newborns, or the unborn litter growing inside.

Different people have different methods as far as the actual mating is concerned. A possible method is to place the rats into a cage with all the necessities (food, water, bedding etc.) towards the end of the evening (keeping an eye on them to make sure they get on ok for a little bit) then to remove the male in the morning.

Signs over the first few weeks will include your doe being very dominant over other females in the cage; she will generally instantly become the alpha rat and be very restrictive of others taking "her" food. BUT, this doesn't mean that you need to give them extra food as the doe will become large and may cause complications during labor. Generally the other rats will "know" that the doe has become pregnant and will let her have the food that she needs and will give her respect and space if needed.

After the first 14 days you should notice an increase in weight and the doe can look like she has swallowed a tennis ball. BUT if the doe is large and carrying a small litter there may not even be a noticeable weight change.

Most does will give birth during the 21st night, it is rare for them to give birth early, but sometimes they don't drop the till the 22nd or 23rd day. If it is any later than this you should start to look out for the doe as there may be problems.

The last week of pregnancy the doe will be very large and will start to build a nest. Most rats will either have their babies at night or early in the morning and expect litters of around 12-15 (some have a lot less some have more).

A sign that labor is approaching is that she will lick her private parts a lot; other signs are a lot of stretching and repositioning to make her comfortable for the birth. It is also likely that you may see spots of blood.

When the doe is approaching labor it is best to keep your distance and leave her in peace. She needs to feel relaxed. I know it is exciting to see rats being born but try and keep away as much as possible and if you are checking then to be as subtle and quiet as possible.

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

Rats are active during the night and sleep during the day (nocturnal). They are easy to handle once trust is established between you and your mice; they may become irritable and nip if suddenly awakened from a nap or startled.

Rats have poor eyesight; they “sway” to detect objects around them. Male and female rats housed together will have offspring, unless spayed or neutered.

Rats chew on objects to maintain the incisor teeth, which grow continuously. Use cheek pouches to transfer food from one location to another.

Grooming: Rats stay clean and do not need baths. They can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth or un-scented baby wipes.