

CARE ♦ PETS

Animal Hospital & Wellness Center

The Best Care For Your Companion

All about Rats

Facts about rats:

- Rats are members of the rodent family.
- Rats can make good first pets and require minimal care, compared to other exotic pets.
- Rats live between 2 to 4 years.

Rat traits and behavior:

- Rats are affectionate and intelligent animals that bond quickly to their owners.
- Rats rarely bite, if they are handled and socialized at a young age.
- Albino rats tend to be more calm and easier to handle than hooded rats.
- Because rats have poor eyesight, they rely on whiskers and scent for sensory input and spatial orientation.

Habitat:

- Housing should be constructed of escape-proof wire mesh with plastic or metal solid flooring and should be large enough to allow nesting, burrowing and exercise.
- Rat cages should be well ventilated. Air should flow freely through the cage. Keep the cage in a cool, low humidity area out of direct sunlight.
- Provide ¼ to 1 inch of soft, absorbent bedding. Recycled paper and aspen shavings work well. Change the bedding regularly to maintain a clean environment.
- Rats are social creatures and need companionship. They should be grouped either all female or all male. Rats of the opposite sex can be housed together if they have been surgically altered (spayed or neutered).
- Exercise may be provided in the form of a large exercise wheel and climbing toys.

Nutrition:

- Rat/rodent pellets provide a complete diet.
- Small amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables may be added.
- Fresh water should be available at all times, ideally provided via a drinking bottle or sipper tube.

Health:

- Regular visits to the veterinarian are recommended for your rat. Wellness check ups are necessary to recognize potential disease and treat it early.

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- Rat's front teeth never stop growing. It is important to give them healthy things to chew on. Chew sticks and other toys should always be kept in the cage.
- Signs of a healthy rat include teeth and claws even, not overgrown; nostrils free of discharge; bright, shiny eyes free of discharge or red secretions; no sneezing, wheezing or labored breathing; no abnormal lumps or scabs; good body weight, neither thin nor obese; alert, inquisitive nature.
- Rats can produce red tears when they are sick or under stress. This is due to the release of a pigment, porphyrin, not blood.
- Things to watch for include blood in the urine, overgrowth of front teeth, hair loss, diarrhea, lethargy, weight loss, red tears or crusts around the eyes, and sneezing.

If any of these signs are noticed, have your rat examined by a veterinarian.