



ADOPTION RESOURCES

FOR YOUR NEW RAT

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Congratulations on Your Rat Adoption!



THE BASICS

Food: Rats have complex vitamin and mineral requirements. Commercial rat food is available at most pet supply stores and will provide a nutritionally balanced diet for your rat. Use a sturdy crockery bowl that can't be tipped over and is easy to clean. You can supplement your rat's diet with small pieces of fruit, vegetables, and salad greens. Nuts, seeds (NO apple seeds), hard-boiled eggs, unsalted/unbuttered popcorn, and unsweetened cereals make good occasional treats. Introduce new foods slowly and in small amounts to reduce the risk of diarrhea.

Water: Keep fresh water available in a suspended "licker" water bottle. Your rat should have access to fresh water at all times.

Housing: Rats need a cage that is at least 20 inches long by 14 inches wide by 24 inches high. Increase the floor area by one square foot for each additional rat. A wire cage with a raised mesh floor and removable tray provides the best air circulation and is the easiest to keep clean. Be sure to include a "house" for privacy, small wooden ladders for climbing, and a thin board so your rat can get off the wire mesh. Be sure to also keep the cage away from direct sunlight and out of drafts.

Rats are very clean by nature and will appreciate a clean home.

Many types of bedding are available. Recycled paper pellets are highly soluble and help to maintain a healthy home. Cedar chips are NOT recommended, as they emit a substance called "phenol" which irritates a rat's nasal passages, throat, and lungs and can lead to serious illness and organ failure. Corncob bedding is also not recommended, as it is very hard on your rat's feet.

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General Rat Information



KEEPING YOUR RAT HEALTHY

The average life span of a rat is two to three years.

Because your rat's teeth grow continuously, it's essential that you provide them with hard things to gnaw on to prevent their teeth from growing too long. Untreated hardwood, dog biscuits, and hard bread crusts are some suggested items.



TYPICAL RAT BEHAVIOR

Approach your rat slowly and be careful not to startle them. Speak softly and let them sniff your hand before you attempt to pick them up. Pick up your rat gently, but firmly, enclosing your hand around their whole body, and supporting all four feet. You may also offer your hand and allow your rat to climb up your arm and onto your shoulders. Never pick your rat up by its tail, because it's painful and could result in injury. The more you handle your rat, the friendlier and tamer they will be.

Feeding your rat a little treat from your fingers will help them to trust you and associate good things with your presence. However, if you give them a treat every time you see them, they may start grabbing your fingers, even if you don't have a treat.

Rats are naturally social animals and don't do very well when isolated. If you don't have a lot of time to spend with your rat, you'll want to consider getting them a companion. Littermates of the same sex tend to get along the best. A neutered male and a female will get along fine as well.

Rats love to play and are fun to watch. They'll explore everything, so you must always be responsible for their safety. If you "rat-proof" an area in your home, then your rat can have free time running and playing with you on the floor. Look around for holes and block them securely to keep your rat from escaping.

Rats like to chew and nibble, so protect anything valuable like important documents, electrical wiring, and houseplants.

Rats can't be housetrained, but they can learn to ride on your shoulder, understand basic commands, and do tricks through positive reinforcement training, like clicker training. Use very small treats to encourage your little friend to come when you call, to reach up and beg, and to navigate mazes.

If introduced to an exercise wheel when young, your rat will continue to use it. Be sure to use a solid wheel, as your rat's tail could get caught between metal bars.