

CARESHEET: Rat

Common Name :- Pet Rat

Classification/Latin name :- *Rattus rattus*

Size :- approx 30cm as an adult (including tail)

Description and sexing:-

Pet rats come in a very wide range of colours and provided they are handled from youngsters won't bite or try to jump from your hand unless frightened so they are excellent pets for children.

Enclosure size:-

A wide range of enclosures are available for rats, they are active animals so a large a tank/cage as possible is recommended. Hamster cages are not large enough.

Heating and temperature:-

Rats DO NOT need to be heated, they should be kept at room temperature. As mammals, rats maintain their own body temperature. Ventilation is needed to prevent over heating and damp within the enclosure.

Lighting and day length:-

No lighting is required other than a natural light source preferably not in direct sunlight as this may cause stress if the rats cannot hide and also risks overheating in summertime. Rats are nocturnal rodents and will rest and sleep during the day. In the evening, they will venture out of hiding to forage for food.

Humidity:-

The enclosure is best kept as dry as possible to prevent damp and otherwise unsanitary conditions.

Substrate and decoration:-

Wood shavings are a suitable substrate as it keeps the tank dry due to its' liquid retaining properties. Climbing branches will allow the rats to exercise. Cork bark can also be provided the rats will climb on and chew. A large drinking bottle is the most hygienic way of providing the rats with water as they have a habit of fouling water bowls. Remember to check the water level every day. Multiple ceramic food dishes should be provided especially if keeping more than one rat.

Feeding and vitamins:-

Rats are best fed on a good quality rat food, hamster and gerbil foods don't contain the right protein content for them. Treats can be given but not through the bars of a cage as this can encourage biting through the bars.

Handling:-

Rats can be gently lifted from the cage onto your hand by the base of the tail or from underneath, if required they can also be gently restrained by the tail while sat on your hand however if they feel trapped they may panic and try to jump. Most are best allowed to walk freely on your hand, Feel free to ask for a demonstration when buying a pet rat from us.