

RAT



FACT SHEET

Pictured Rat : **Fancy Rat**

Genus : **Rattus**

Specie : **Norvegicus**

Male is called a : **Buck**

Female is called a : **Doe**

Young are called a : **Pups**

Adult Weight : **400 - 800g**

The average life expectancy : **2 - 4 Years**

Oestrus : **Every 4-5 days, lasts 12 - 14hrs**

Gestation period : **From 20 to 22 days**

Breeding Life of a male is : **18 Months**

Breeding Life of a female is : **18 Months**

Average Litter Size Varies : **6 - 12**

Young are born : **Bare/Bald & Blind**

Birth Weight : **5g**

Weaning Age : **3 - 4 Weeks**

Eyes open : **from 12 - 14 days**

HANDLING

When picking up a rat placing one hand round the shoulders with the thumb under the lower jaw to prevent biting.

Rats have extremely poor eye sight, remember to take a slow approach to picking up and handling a rat as calmly as possible as a rat can sense nervousness and may act upon it and possibly bite.

The more you handle a rat the more confident it can become.



SEXING YOUR RAT

The main difference when sexing rats is the distance between the anus and the gentiles, which is much greater on a male rat. It is more obvious and easier to sex after 1 month of age when the testicles are more prominent on the male.

when picking up a rat as described above face the belly of the rat towards you and then look for the following to determine the sex.

MALE : Will have a rounded area which is the indication of the scrotal sack between the penis and anus with a large spacing between. You will also notice a male does not have nipples.

FEMALE : Will not have testicles. The anus and vagina will also be closer together and she will have up to 12 nipples in 2 parallel rows.

FEEDING

Rats are omnivores which means they eat meat and plants. The correct food for rats should be a mix of the two and a mature rat can eat between 40-50g per day,

Young rates require a protein rich diet to help with growth until the age of 12 weeks. To help with a pups stable diet of corn, maize, dried pees and wheat you can add extra peanuts and sunflower seeds.

Hamster food should not be fed to a rat as contains more seed than grain and can make a rat fat and unhealthy.

Mineral licks should be provided minerals and to help rats maintain healthy teeth.

You can also introduce minerals also by giving vegetables such as : **celery, carrots and tomatoes.**

HOUSING & HUSBANDRY

Caging : When buying a cage you need to make sure the rat has lots of room to run around. Preferably a wire cage is best, the bars of the cage should have a gap no greater than 12.5mm with a secure lid that is well ventilated. Water bottles need to have a steel spout so they cannot be chewed and cleaned daily with a bottle brush. Provide a metal or ceramic food bowl, as a plastic one can be gnawed on.

Enrichment : Give your rats plenty of toys and entertainment for example: Branches, Ropes, tunnels etc. Rats are great at escaping. If you rat becomes board it could chew plastics of the cage and escape.

Provide a hiding area for the rat so it can have an area of privacy to relax, 2 rats of the same sex will entertain and clean each other. if you would like multiple rats you need to make sure the cage is large enough.

Cleaning

Every day water bottles should be emptied, cleaned, refilled and put back in.

Food (vegetables) to be removed and fresh veg to be added each day.

At least once a week (More frequent if required) replace all bedding and use the correct disinfectants and cleaning apparatus when doing so. Failure to do so could end up in a trip to the vet.

When cleaning always make sure you use rodent friendly liquids. like "keep it clean"

Bedding : Hay and wood shavings, Try to avoid cedar and pine shavings as they could contain **phenols** which is harmful to rats.

Requirements & Equipment when purchasing

Cage, Food-bowl (not plastic), Water-bottle (steel spout), Bedding-shavings, cleaning equipment, Hay, Toys, Vitamins, Salt lick.

HEALTH CHECK

Always check your rat as much as possible to ensure a healthy companion, here is a list of checks to do to maintain a health animal.

A healthy rat will spend most of its day asleep, but when awake it will spend most of its time cleaning and creating a shiny smooth coat.

Check inner ears : Make sure they are clear and have no rendering.

Eyes : make sure they fully open and are clear and have no discharge.

Nose : Clean of dirt and discharge and of natural colour.

Teeth : Make sure they are straight, parallel and not to long.

Body : An unhealthy rat will have a hunched appearance.

Coat : Make sure the coat is smooth, shinny and not patchy.

Claws/Toes : Make sure none are missing, damaged or deformed.

Anus & Genitals : Check for discharge and inflammation from the penis/vaginal/ area and diarrhoea from the anus.

Disease / Disorder	Cause	Visual Signs / Symptoms	Treatment / Prevention
Coccidiosis	Caused by protozoan parasites transferred through excitement, Food & soiled bedding.	Loss of Appetite, diarrhoea, weight loss, excessive drinking, develops a harsh coat.	Seek Veterinary advice for Coccidiosat to put in food and water
Mange	A mite parasite, contracted from other infected rats	Skin irritation. Breakdown of skin cells on the body and tail.	Improved hygiene. Seek veterinary assistance of ointment.
Respiratory - Pulmonary Problems	Disease caused by a virus that can get worse in crowded conditions. Can be passed to pups through pregnancy by doe's	Problems breathing and teeth chattering sound from exertion.	Seek veterinary assistance
Teeth & Nails	Continuous growth and lack of items to gnaw on.	Weight loss	Trim & cutback on a regular basis. add mineral block to gnaw on.
Wounds & Abscesses	Caused by fighting or self harming out of boredom	Bald patches, Sores & Redness	Check cage to make sure there are no sharp edges, add toys to entertain the rat, bath with antiseptic solution, in severe cases seek veterinary advice.