



## Caring for you new RAT

Rats make great family pets. They are intelligent and interactive; they become tame when regularly handled.

Fancy rats are descendants of brown rats, which originated from Asia. Rat fancy as a formal, organized hobby began when a woman named Mary Douglas asked for permission to bring her pet rats to an exhibition of the National Mouse Club at the Aylesbury Town Show in England on October 24, 1901. Her black and white hooded rat won "Best in Show," and ignited interest in the area. Pet rats are now commonly available in stores and from breeders, and there exist several rat fancy groups worldwide.

Rats are social animals and it is strongly recommended that they are kept in single sex pairs or groups. This gives them the opportunity to interact. It is best to introduce rats to live together when they are young, or in a place that is neutral territory (ask if you are unsure).

The average life-span is 2 ½ years. Some have been known to live up to 4years.

### Choosing and buying your rat

There are many colours available such as: white or albino, Hooded, Agouti and Cinnamon. There is also a Rex variety with curly coat and whiskers. Whichever variety you decide on your rat should be a minimum of 4 weeks old.

A healthy rat should be:

- Bright and alert
- Have no signs of discharge from eyes, ears, mouth and nose
- Have a clean anal area

- Have a glossy coat
- Should have no signs of breathing problems
- Should move around cage easily
- Should feel well covered and not bony

### Housing

A cage of at least 60cm x 35cm x 25cm will give your rat adequate space. However they love to climb and will appreciate separate areas for feeding, sleeping and exercise. Cages specially designed for rats will be plastic and wire and will be 2 or more level high. Most importantly they must be escape proof.

Rats will enjoy a varied environment with branches, tunnel and ropes. Most places will sell wood chip or sawdust, but as they are prone to breathing problems, anything dust free (Carefresh bedding) would be ideal as a substrate. Your rat will also appreciate a nest box or area with shredded soft paper (newspaper is not ideal because of the inks).

Rats are clean in their habits but will need their bedding changed and their cage cleaned at least once a week, with a pet-safe disinfectant.

Rats are indoor pets that should be kept in a even temperature ideally between 16°C and 22°C. You should avoid putting the cage in drafts, direct sunlight or in damp or humid conditions.

Rats are inquisitive and active therefore they should be provided with as much stimulation as possible. Try and buy a selection of toys and rotate them to avoid boredom.

### Feeding and Water

Rats are omnivores and so will enjoy a varied diet. A complete rat mix should be the basis of the diet. This can be supplemented with small amounts of fruit, vegetables, and the occasional boiled egg. Uneaten fruit should be removed the next day. Most rats are prone to nut allergies, so stay away from any treat or food mixes with nuts contained in the packet. Rhubarb or avocado can upset your rat's stomach but unlike humans, rats don't have the ability to be sick.

Rats will enjoy a mineral block which should be available for their use. Food bowls should be sturdy, gnaw proof and easily disinfected. Fresh drinking water should always be available for your rat. It should be provided by a water bottle designed to fit your rat's cage.

### Handling

Settling in:

When you take your new rat home he/she could be very nervous. Make sure you spend as much time with him/her as you can, handling your rat will help them build a relationship with you. When you first get your rat home allow him/her 24 hours to get used to their environment. Allow your rat to sniff your hands before handling; this will get him/her used to your smell. Stroke your rat and be sure he/she is facing you, and then cup both hands around him and pick them up. Always concentrate when holding your rat as they are quick and can easily slip out of your hands.

**Never pick your rats up by the tail!** They use their tails for balance.

### General Care

Rats normally stay healthy throughout their lives. They can suffer from sneezing and breathing problems. **Ensure you are using good quality dust-free bedding in your rat's cage.**

If sneezing and breathing problems persist, contact your vet. Rats can get mites in their fur; recommended small animal sprays can usually deal with these. If you are concerned with your rat's health speak with your vet.

### Shopping List

- Food (Care+ Beaphar)
- Water Bottle/Bottle brush/Food Bowl
- Soft bedding/Dust-Free bedding (Carefresh)
- Escape proof cage
- Brush/Comb
- Wooden Chews (to stop their teeth growing too much)
- Mineral Blocks (Chilly Chews)
- Insecticidal Spray (Johnson's)
- Treats/training treats
- Shampoo/deodorizing spray
- Pet-safe disinfectant
- Book on care and history of rats

**For more information feel free to talk to any of the Jumanji Pets employees, we are here to help!**

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