



Sydney Exotics & Rabbit Vets

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SYDNEY EXOTICS & RABBIT VETS

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NORTH SHORE VETERINARY SPECIALIST CENTRE

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PET RAT CARE

Vital Statistics

Life expectancy	2 – 3.5 years	Weaning	3 weeks
Breeding	4 – 5 weeks	Pregnancy	21 - 23 days
Litter size	6 - 13	Adult body weight	225 - 500g

Rats are a rodent animal. They can make ideal pets due to their small size, ease of care & quiet nature. They can be very interactive & sociable animals who readily accept human companionship. Rats are also known to be intelligent animals. They are fastidiously clean animals & can become very used to handling, especially if handling is started at a young age.

Housing

- Rats can be housed in a range of cage types. Provide a cage as **large as possible** and ensure that it is easy to clean & well ventilated
- Ensure that the area that they're kept in will not become too hot as they are prone to heat stress
- Regularly clean the cage & change their bedding to avoid ammonia build up
- Suitable **bedding materials** include shredded newspaper or pelleted recycled paper 'cat-litter'. Rats love to burrow, so make sure a good thickness of bedding is provided
- Make certain that the cage is **predator proof**
- Provide boxes for 'hiding' places
- Use dripper type **water bottles**. Water bowls are likely to become soiled
- Rats are sociable animals, consider housing at least 2 together. They can also be housed in colonies

Handling

- Rats can usually be handled quite easily. Pick them up by gently placing your hand(s) under them & be sure to support the full length of their body
- Encourage regular daily handling & play/explore time outside of their cage
- Rats should be provided with **daily exercise & mental stimulation** to avert obesity & boredom
- Be sure to wash your hands after handling your rats

Feeding

- Rats are **omnivores** (they eat plant & animal material). They will eat a wide variety of food if offered
- Rats can be offered small amounts of good quality rat pellets (ensure they have a protein content of at least 16% & fat content of 4-5%) & ad lib **Fresh** fruits & vegetables daily. Some examples of these include;
Fruit & Vegies: apples, pears, banana, melons, stone fruits, citrus fruits, broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts, kale, endive, carrots, bok choy/other Asian greens, celery, parsley, berries, tomato, fresh corn, beans, peas
- Avoid feeding rats a seed/grain mix. Rats are very prone to becoming obese & malnourished on these mixes. They tend to 'select' their favourite bits in the mix
- **Treats** (should only be offered in **very small amounts!**) Cereals, grains, seeds, breads, biscuits, sweets, cooked pasta & rice, breakfast cereals, chocolate!

Health and Veterinary Care

- Have any newly acquired pet rat checked by a vet, especially if you intend to mix the rat with others. Thereafter have them checked at least annually
- Desexing rats can help prevent mammary tumours (females) and reduce aggression. It also allows male and female rats to be mixed
- Pet health insurance is more widely available nowadays and is worth considering for your pet rat
- At home you should always monitor closely your rats food intake, body condition, eyes, ears, mouth, feet & toileting behaviour