



Rats

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Rats are intelligent, energetic and playful animals. Their average lifespan is two to four years. Rats are nocturnal animals meaning they are most active during the night. Some rats are so intelligent that they can learn tricks, enjoy games and become responsive to their name being called. Rats are social animals that are happiest when kept as same sex pairs who are familiar with each other. You may also house together a pair that has been spayed and neutered. These intelligent rodents make wonderful pets because they are relatively easy to handle and they bond strongly to their human family members.

Diet

Rats are omnivores meaning they eat both plant material and meat. The base of a rat's diet should be rodent blocks purchased from the pet supply store. Fruits, veggies, grains and oats should also be served on a daily basis. Although rats love junk food such as potato chips and baked goods, these foods are not nutritionally sound and will lead to obesity. Because they are omnivorous, rats enjoy small amounts of cooked, low-fat meats.

Health

Rats do not require vaccinations. There are some ailments that are commonly found in pet rats. Chronic pneumonia is recognized as sneezing, sniffing, labored breathing, tearing and rough coat condition. If the disease is not treated early enough the result can be death. Respiratory infections and tumors are also conditions that affect pet rats. It is important to check your pet rat on a weekly basis for lumps and bumps. If you observe decreased appetite, lethargy or weight loss, please take your rat to a veterinarian who specializes in small animals. Because rats have constantly growing teeth, appropriate items to chew on must be provided to avoid serious health problems.

Housing

Because of a rat's curious nature and ability to climb, it is important to provide a cage with height. A multi-layered wire cage with a solid bottom is ideal. Safe wheels (plastic wheels with no spokes work well), hanging hammocks, tunnels and nesting boxes are all important pieces of furniture to be included in the cage. Large aquariums with a mesh lid are also an option when looking at housing for a rat. Just be aware that aquariums do not provide as much ventilation as wire cages and aquariums will need to be cleaned more often than a wire cage.

Fun Facts

Rats do not have tonsils.

A group of rats is called a mischief.

Some rats can be taught to play soccer.

Rats clean themselves on a daily basis and there is no need to bathe them although some enjoy swimming!