

## Feeding Your Rat

Rats have a tendency to eat anything they can in the wild but as responsible pet owners we can feed them a correct diet.

The diet we would recommend would be a pellet based formulation. This is advised to limit the risk of selective feeding which can occur if given too much choice with a “muesli” type diet. These diets may cause your rat to become malnourished which may lead to other illnesses.

They can be given treats such as washed fruit, seeds, meat scraps, cooked egg and vegetable portions. Only give these in moderation and try hiding them in your rat’s home to encourage natural scavenging behaviour.



Rats should be given indestructible bowls e.g. ceramic or metal so they cannot gnaw through them. They like to drink plenty of fresh water so this will need changing on a daily basis.

## Housing Requirement

Rats require a fairly sizable house to allow them lots of exercise and stimulation. Buy as big a cage as you can afford. Cardboard boxes and toilet roll inners are great to put in the cage as well as objects to climb on and wooden toys to gnaw. A large multi-level wire cage is good for rats as they cannot chew through them.



Rats will play in wheels but ensure you get a full wheel as the wire ones can often trap the tail of a rat causing severe injury and distress. Rope toys and hidey holes are also recommended.

Rats need a separate area to sleep in, away from the toilet area. Therefore a good idea to get a multi-level cage. Fill the sleeping area with soft but durable, cozy, nesting material, avoiding anything sharp e.g. straw as this can often cause irritations or damage to your rat’s eyes. Hammocks are a hit!



Rats need to be housed away from direct sunlight, cold draughts and loud noises e.g. the television or washing machine.

## Care and Company

Your pet rat’s teeth grow constantly and therefore a constant supply of chew toys should be supplied to allow proper wear. Untreated wooden ones are the best.

This picture shows an example of when a rat’s teeth have not been wearing down correctly.



Rats are also at risk of mite infestations. The signs of this are itching, bald patches and inappetence. Take them to the vets immediately if you see any of these signs.

Rats like to have a companion therefore it is advisable to buy two from the same litter so they already know each other and will hopefully get on. This is easier than introducing a new rat to a settled environment. Two of the same sex make the best pairing. Males and females can live together but neuter those males otherwise you will end up with more than you started with!

Rats are friendly towards humans but they need to be handled correctly. First and foremost always make sure your pet is awake and can smell you before you attempt to handle it, as they are a prey animal and their first instinct is to bite! Gently hold the rat around the shoulders with your thumb just behind the front legs and support the hind feet with your other hand.

**NEVER** pick a rat up by its tail!

Please ensure you are ready to devote time and attention to any new pet you may get.

Every species has different needs and requirements so plenty of research is advisable!



## RAT FACT FILE

**Male : Buck**  
**Female : Doe**  
**Young : Kittens**  
**Life Span : 2 - 4 years**  
**Gestation Period : 20 - 22 days**  
**Litter size : 6 - 16 Kittens**  
**Eyes open : 10 - 16 days**  
**Weaning Age : 3 - 4 weeks**  
**Sexual maturity : 6 - 10 weeks**



## PET RAT CARE GUIDE



Abbey House Veterinary Hospital  
Commercial Street  
Morley  
Leeds  
LS27 8AG  
Phone: 0113 2525818  
Email [vets@abbeyvetpets.co.uk](mailto:vets@abbeyvetpets.co.uk)

Abbey House Veterinary Hospital  
Commercial Street  
Morley  
Leeds  
LS27 8AG  
Phone: 0113 2525818  
Email [vets@abbeyvetpets.co.uk](mailto:vets@abbeyvetpets.co.uk)  
Visit us at [www.abbeyvetpets.co.uk](http://www.abbeyvetpets.co.uk)