

# Dirty rat, dull and mousey? Anything

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When people jump onto chairs shrieking with hysteria and looking down in fear, there's often only one reason for it: a mouse has just scampered across the floor. Well, that's how it is on the TV, at least. Their much bigger fellow beings, the rats, also encounter much loathing. Their bad reputation as carriers of disease has become lodged in people's minds since the middle ages. However, one man's plague is another's favourite pet. Experts at the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo know why this is...

Tame mice and, above all, rats are not only cute, nosey and companionable – they are also very intelligent. For responsible, older children or teenagers and working people, they are trusting housemates who are happy even in small rooms and flats. But they do need accommodation which suits their needs in the form of sufficiently large cages or glass tanks.

The mice which you can purchase in specialist pet shops or from breeders are, in general, the so-called "fancy mouse" variety. They originate from the grey-brown house mouse which in fact come from the Steppes and desert areas of North West Africa and East Asia but are now widespread throughout the whole world. Wild house mice are considered to be successful synanthropes: that is, while not domesticated, they follow people into new settlements where they benefit from the food and living conditions. Incidentally, white albino mice were revered and tamed by some people a thousand years ago as symbols of luck. However, the career of the mouse as a house pet

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first began around 100 years ago with the breeding of laboratory mice, then later as pets. This breeding continued with special colour variations and qualities necessary for coexistence with humans.

The tame rat has had a similar development behind it as the mouse.

Strictly speaking, rats come from the same family – they are just bigger than their little furry snouted relatives. Their ancestors, the brown rats are also adaptable synanthropes with their original homeland in East Asia. As with mice, people have bred on particularly fascinating, amicable examples of the brown rat as laboratory rats and later as the "fancy" rat in various colour nuances. The morning and evening active rat is seen as being very crafty: it will allow itself to be trained, even sometimes answer to its name and recognise its master or mistress.

Both mice and rats are animals that live together in large social clans. This characterises their social behaviour: they clean, hunt, agree things, and cuddle each other. That's why rodent lovers should always opt for more than one animal. The little explorers also put great store in keeping busy and running around. Owners should put about one hour aside for them each day. Whoever is lucky enough to have an especially intelligent animal that's keen to learn will have much to enjoy throughout their rodent's life span – about two to three years for a mouse and some three to five years for rats.



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