

SHOPPING LIST:

- ✗ information leaflet about rats
- large cage
- nest box
- heavy feeding bowl
- water bottle
- floor covering (e.g. soft wood granules, straw or natural bedding)
- hay (rich in herbs, dry, dust-free)
- dried herbs
- rat food (premium food)
- nibble sticks
- snack ball
- mineral stone, salt lick
- vitamin supplements (Vitamin C + Ascorbic Acid)
- wood for gnawing on (hardwood gnawing block, wicker bridge)
- tubes and tunnels
- root for climbing
- disinfectant/detergent for cleaning the cage
- book about rats

REPRODUCTION

1. Rats reach sexual maturity at 4 - 10 weeks.
2. The size of the litter can be from 6 - 14 babies.
3. The gestation period is 21 - 23 weeks.
4. The young can be taken away from mother at 4 - 5 weeks.

DO I LIKE COMPANY?

Rats are very sociable animals and should always be kept with other rats or a partner at the very least. To avoid breeding it is best to just keep animals of the same sex together.

A strict hierarchy is observed within a community of rats and a new rat will not be allowed to invade their territory. For this reason, the integration of adult animals should always take place in a new, neutral cage. It is much easier for young rats to get used to one another.

Rats can become pregnant from a very young age (6 weeks) so babies should be separated according to sex in good time.



HOW I SHOULD BE HANDLED?

Let your new rat get used to its surroundings for a few days before you start to try and tame it. Speak to it and put your hand carefully into its cage so that it can sniff at it. If you are holding something to nibble (it should be a special, rodent treat, like those available at Maxi Zoo) your hand will be of much greater interest.

Always pick up the rat with two hands, one hand around the ribcage and the other supporting the hindquarters. The rat must not be held or carried by the tail since this can cause painful tail injuries.



My rat

Everything you need to know about rats as pets.



Everything for your pet

www.maxizoo.ie

For more tips and further information on rats visit our website at: www.maxizoo.ie

AM I THE RIGHT PET FOR YOU?

Rats are very highly rated as pets owing to their intelligence and friendly nature. However, they are very sensitive and therefore only suitable for older children or grown-ups. They need lots of activity and exercise, so one to two hours should be put aside for these rodents every day. Also savings should not be made on the size and furnishing of the cage. There are many different varieties and colours of rats.

The average life expectancy of rats is approx. 3 years.

WHERE DO I ORIGINATE FROM?

The rat that is now kept as a pet originates from the brown rat, or to be more precise, from an albino variety of the same species, which was discovered on open hunting ground in Great Britain last century. Since then it has made a sad career out of being a laboratory animal, but is now finding an ever increasing circle of admirers amongst pet owners.



WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE FOR ME TO LIVE?

Of course, your rat's new home should be as big as possible and equipped with several different levels.

Our Maxi Zoo staff will gladly give you advice on choosing the most suitable cage for your rat.

The contents of the cage have to be very versatile (i.e. different levels with things to climb, ropes, roots, tubes etc.) and should be rearranged frequently. Of course, no home should be without a nest box. If the cage does have a second level it should be made of plastic, or better still wood, but never steel grating. Extremely young rats need a very varied environment that gives them lots of opportunity to investigate. This will not only make them more alert and intelligent but also less susceptible to stress than pets that are raised without anything to stimulate them.

The cage must be thoroughly cleaned at least once a week. Droppings and urine are to be disposed of daily.

Heat from direct sun or a radiator and more importantly, draughts, are to be avoided at all costs, since they can be extremely damaging to the animal's health.

Dust-free sawdust, hay, straw and natural bedding are all suitable for the floor of the cage.

It is best to choose a food bowl that is shallow and heavy (e.g. a solid ceramic or earthenware bowl).



KEEP ME FIT AND HEALTHY

A healthy rat is very active, playful and curious, has a thick, gleaming coat of fur, large eyes and a clean nose. Symptoms that the rat is unwell include loss of appetite, diarrhoea, apathy, bristly hair and mucus or crust around the eyes or nose. If you suspect that your rat is unwell take it to a vet immediately.

Rats are very sensitive to draughts so always make sure that they are housed in a draught-free location.

Rats also have very sensitive stomachs. Therefore,

greenery alone should not be given in large quantities.

It is very important to continually check that their teeth are satisfactory. If they get too long, a vet will have to shorten them.

WHAT DO I LIKE TO EAT?

Rats are out and out gourmets and need a varied diet. Rat food (premium food) is most suitable. This is supplemented with fresh fruit and vegetables. Mealworms, hard-boiled eggs, some cheese or potatoes are also recommended. A small amount of hay or oats a day prevents digestive problems. Rats are prone to obesity and so should not be overfed. To encourage gnawing, hardwood gnawing blocks, wood from native fruit trees or unshelled hazel nuts should be put in the cage.

Stale food must be removed from the cage immediately.

Fresh water must be permanently available; a rodent drip feed bottle is the best option.

HEALTH CHECKLIST

A healthy rat

- moves nimbly and quickly,
- has clean fur especially around the nose, mouth, eyes and anus area,
- has a thick coat without any encrustations,
- breathes without making an audible noise,
- has a straight back,
- is unharmed and has no open wounds.

