

Wilmette Pet, Your Family's Pet Care Sheet

Common Name:	Fancy Rat
Scientific Name:	<i>Rattus Norvegicus</i>
Adult Size:	Males weigh from 400 – 800 grams. Females weigh from 250 – 450 grams.
Lifespan:	Rats range from 2-4 years.
Male/Female Differences:	Males are usually a lot larger than females and they can be easily sexed.
Compatibility:	Rats are social animals that live in wherever in the wild. Interaction and socialization are important in developing a rat so that it will learn to trust you. If possible consider getting a pair so that you are not the only source of interaction the rat receives.
Origin:	Northern Europe.
Climate:	Average temperatures in cities, farms, wherever humans maintain surplus of goods.
Day Cycle:	Nocturnal.
Temperature:	Avoid extremes, an average home temperature of 75 degrees F will suffice.
Lighting:	No special requirement besides a room's lighting.
Humidity:	Low or none.
Habitat/Territory:	Rats live wherever humans live.
Substrate/Bedding:	Aspen bedding is the most affordable is a good option given their cage is properly ventilated, since a drawback to aspen is its dustiness. Carefresh is the better option because of the low amounts of dust and it provides more comfort to the rat.
Hiding Place/Den:	Chew safe toys and non-toxic hiding places will increase their level of interaction when they are left alone. Hiding

places will give them a comfort zone and an escape during the day.

Cage Type:	Aquarium cages of 15 gallons or more are good as long as it is well ventilated. You can go with a wire cage if it is escape proof. Exercise is key here, with more toys, wheels the better. As with most creatures, the bigger the cage the better.
Diet:	Rats will eat anything, but a decent diet will consist of pet blocks, nuts, grains, oats, and seeds. For more variety throw in some dried fruit, meat, and chips. They will gladly accept the change.
Supplements:	Vitamins in water help supply missing nutrients from captive diets. Depending on what you feed, supplements such as Pro-zyme and vitamin tablets can aid in their digestion and a healthier looking coat.
Diet Precautions:	The best way to feed a rat is the rat/hamster mix. Anything else like meat and dry fruits should be given sparingly and avoid high-calorie diets.
Feeding:	A rat's stomach is about half the size of their head so try not to overfeed. Give about that size twice a day and throw away the leftovers.
Water Source:	Most store rats are used to water bottles, but they will happily drink from a bowl. Rinse and wash both and supply fresh water each day. The water bottle may require a metal guard as the rat will gnaw and render the bottle useless.
Grooming:	Rats aren't the most high maintenance pet out there, but if you must clean them go with dust powder or gently wipe them with pet safe wipes. Dust powders are made of volcanic ash, which eliminate extra oils and moisture giving your chinchilla that clean, fluffy look. Whenever your rat is looking dirty put in an ample amount of dust in an easily accessed container and they will start cleaning themselves.
Oral and Foot Care:	Rats need chew toys or else their teeth will grow continuously. Supply them with chew treats, or pumice blocks.

Proper Handling: Rats are one of the most sociable creatures next to dogs, cats and ferrets. They will almost never bite you unless you ask for it. As with any new pet give them time to get to know you and eventually you will be able to put them in your pocket with no problem. Proper handling is grabbing them with both hands and securing them so they won't fall down. Never grab them by the tail.

Habitat Maintenance: Rats tend to go to the bathroom in the corners. Spot clean their cage daily and once a week clean out the whole thing. They are not incredibly messy so it shouldn't take that long.

Health Concerns: Diarrhea due to poor diet, congenital cancers, and obesity. A proper nutrition can help prevent or at least retard the cancer.

Summary: Rats are perfect first pets or classroom pets. They are almost as sociable as a dog or a cat They are not pets to be ignored; they must have daily interaction either from you or another rat. They also must be let out of their cage to promote exercise and proper health. A rat(s) is a great addition to any home interested in a first pet as they provide friendship, amusement, and are quiet intelligent. Even though they only live for about 3 years, you can be sure they will leave memories that will last for a lifetime.