

RATS CARE GUIDE



Rats care

Owning and caring for rats is great fun and very rewarding, but it is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment. Did you know rats can live on average 3 – 5 years?

Getting your rat's diet and environment correct is the best way of ensuring a long and healthy life. Here are some guidelines for offering your rats the best care:

- **Rats are highly social animals** and should always live in same sex groups or a neutered male with females. A group of rats is called a 'swarm', 'pack' or 'mischief'. It is possible that one male and female rat can have over one million descendants in less than two years. Male rats must be neutered.
- **Male rats (bucks) are laid back** and once they grow out of the juvenile stage they are only too happy to curl up on your lap or sit on your shoulder and watch the world go by.
- **Female rats (does) are busy bees always on the go**, doing housework or getting into mischief. They are sociable and love attention but if there is something exciting happening elsewhere they have to explore.
- **Rats are very loyal.** They will give you a lot of companionship and fun but you must be dedicated. If you cannot give a rat at least two hours of playtime and interaction with you a day, perhaps rats are not the companion for you.
- **Rats are highly intelligent;** they will come when called, can be taught tricks and quickly learn commands.
- **A rat's sense of smell and hearing is great but their eyesight is poor.** Always talk to your rat when entering their cage, especially if the rat is pink eyed.
- **Rats urinate on the go**, so it is important to keep the cage and bedding clean to prevent respiratory problems. They also have scent glands on the soles of their feet to leave scent trails to mark their territory.
- **Provide plenty of clean, warm bedding** such as a paper substrate or natural paper pellet (cat litter). Wood shavings are not advisable as they give off aromatic oils which are harmful to rats and other small animals.
- **Check your rats for signs of injury and illness every day.**
 - Check teeth are not becoming overgrown – seek veterinary advice if necessary.
 - Check the coat and skin for signs of mites, bald patches, sores or lumps. Seek veterinary advice.
 - The chin should be free from scabs – protein related scabs can accumulate under the chin.

Diet

- **Complimentary feeds:** this should be in pellet form with balanced nutrients, rather than a muesli mix, to prevent selective feeding. If feeding a muesli mix, choose a more natural looking mix rather than one which is high in colour (red, green, etc.), as these contain sugars and artificial colourings.
- **Fresh water**, available at all times.
- **Additional feeds, in moderation:** cooked potato, broccoli, chicken, fish, cooked or raw pasta, sweetcorn. Unsweetened breakfast cereals. Rice, bananas, grapes, yoghurt. Scrambled or boiled eggs.
- Rats enjoy food from your plate and can eat many of the foods we do, but only the healthy options.
- **Treats:** if treats are given avoid commercial treats which are high in sugars.

Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare, The Broyle, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ.

Tel: (01825) 880467 Fax: (01825) 840995 E-mail: smallanimals1@raystede.org www.raystede.org

Chief Executive: Nigel Mason. President: Morgan Williams. Registered Charity No. 237696. Registered Office: Raystede, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5AJ. Registered in England No. 816674

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN ADOPTING A RAYSTED E RATS



Adoption Fees: **£15**

(Average daily cost of care for all small animals at Raystede is in excess of £300)

Rehoming rats

We aim to find the best forever homes for the rats that end up in our care, so we have several **rehoming requirements** to guarantee each rat finds the right home:

- **Rats are always rehomed in pairs, single sex groups, or a neutered male with one or multiple females.**

We only rehome single rats as a companion for an existing rat. Males must be neutered before rehoming.

- **A cage of at 80 x 50 x 79cm / 2½ x 1½ x 2½ ft**

There are a number of different cages for sale that are suitable for rats. We recommend a 'Jenny Cage' which includes shelves and tubes. Hammocks, ladders, tubes and various toys all help to make the cage as fun as possible. This in turn can help prolong the life of your rats.

We take particular care where there are children under 7 years to ensure we will find the right match.

Raystede rats are:

- Health checked by a vet
- Neutered (males only)
- Follow up advice available

Applying to adopt Raystede rats

Having read this Rats Care Guide, if you are still interested in adopting Raystede rats and feel you can provide the necessary care, please complete an application form.

Before your application is approved, the Small Animals team must approve your rat's accommodation via photos clearly showing their accommodation. Please email photos to smallanimals1@raystede.org or bring to Customer Services.

If you reserve an animal, we will honour this reserve for up to 2 weeks (excluding exceptional circumstances at staff discretion).

Thank you for your interest and support. We hope we can help you find some new companions.

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