

# Rats

## Cool behavior facts and stuff

- Super, super social. They need people and other rats.
- Very intelligent. They are capable of learning commands and often come when called.
- They usually make great pets for kids because they rarely bite and they are highly interactive and affectionate.
- They're kind of like little low maintenance dogs, and most landlords are ok with them.
- They live about 2-3 years.
- They'll be really offended if you put them in exercise balls. They're way too smart for that.
- Males tend to be more laid-back and cuddly with people while females tend to be more energetic and are often a little cleaner.
- They grind their teeth when they are happy. This activity is called "bruxing".
- They're easy to litter box train.

## Diet

**Blocks:** About 80% of a rat's diet should consist of fortified rat blocks. Avoid colorful blocks and seed mixes. Mazuri and Oxbow are quality brands.

**Fruits and Veggies:** About 20% of a rat's diet should contain fresh fruits and vegetables. Most fruits and vegetables that are safe for humans are safe for rats.

## Housing

**Cage:** Should be at least 12"x24"x12" but bigger is always better. Rats need vertical climbing space in their cages, but it's also important to make sure that the base is wide so the bedding and ammonia buildup is less concentrated. The cage MUST be wire with a solid base. Aquariums create too much ammonia buildup and can literally suffocate rats.

**Bedding:** Carefresh or other paper pulp beddings are best. Towels are also ok, but some rats chew them up. Some sort of nesting material should be provided (hay, towels, cotton bedding), especially for females who love to dig and store food in secret places around the cage. **Never use pine or cedar bedding** because the oils irritate the rat's respiratory system and can also irritate the skin. If a litter box is used, use a different type of bedding than is used in the rest of the cage.

**Accessories:** Rats need plenty of places to hide and things to climb on. They also need lots to chew on, otherwise they become bored. Rats, particularly males, might not use exercise wheels unless they've been exposed to them as babies. If a wheel is used, it must be closed on one side and not be made out of wire. Plastic and wood wheels are available.

## General Care

- Clean the cage at least once a week. Litter box should be scooped once a week.
- Have a vet in mind, even though rats don't need regular exams. Any House Rabbit Society approved vet is generally good with other small animals.

## Most Common Health Problems

- URI: Almost all rats carry bacteria called mycoplasma in their lungs.
- Heart issues
- Cancer

## Sweet Resources

[www.ratfanclub.org](http://www.ratfanclub.org)  
[www.rmca.org](http://www.rmca.org)