



NORFOLK INDUSTRIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Part of *Independence Matters*

Guide to Rats

Latin Name – *Rattus Norvegicus*

Scientific Order - Rodentia

Average Adult Size – 8 inches long

Average Life Span – Up to 5 years

Diet – Omnivores



General Information

The Brown or Norway rat originated from wetland habitats in Asia. Being a highly adaptable and intelligent species, they were quickly able to spread worldwide by smuggling aboard cargo ships.

While rats can communicate with each other using ultrasonic squeaks and see ultraviolet light, their sense of smell is thought to be most important as it's used to identify key distinctions between individual rats such as age, rank and even what they have been eating.

Behaviour

Rats are a very sociable species with complex interactions indicating their intelligence, which has made them useful in conducting behavioural studies in laboratories.



Being nocturnal, this behaviour happens most often at night when rats display the most sophisticated play style of all rodents.

Generally rats live in groups consisting of a dominant male with females and male subordinates. When groups become too large they split into smaller family groups.

Equipment Required

- Cage/habitat – A rat should be housed in either a plastic, metal or glass container with a solid bottom. To provide plenty of opportunity for exercise, ensure habitat has plenty of room for running and climbing.

- Food – A well-balanced diet can consist either of a high-quality rat food; or fresh grain, vegetables and fruits, which must be provided in limited quantities.



- Water – Fresh water should always be available.
- Wooden blocks – As a rat's claws and teeth grow continuously, ensure they have plenty of wood to chew on.
- Any bedding should be 1-2 inches deep and of high quality. Norfolk Industries can provide the paper flakes bedding of the standard required -

www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/recycled-pet-bedding/flaked-paper-bedding/



- A nesting material such as Norfolk Industries cotton bedding - www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/fibre-pet-bedding/white-cotton-bedding/



- Provide a solid running wheel, and plenty of tunnels and pet safe branches to gnaw on. A Norfolk Industries 'Chewy' tubes complete with bedding, to provide hideaway place and help with chewing ability would provide a great addition to your pet's habitat. See product details at www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/nesting-tubes/



- Animal House – such as Norfolk Industries Small Animal house, see product details at <https://www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/animal-house/animal-houses/>



Maintenance Tasks



- Remove wet spots daily, and change whole bedding at least once



a week.

- Clean habitat at least once a week with mild soap and water. Allow to dry fully before returning rat.
- Water should be changed daily.
- Vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.
- Habitat should never be in direct sunlight or

exceed 80°F.

Grooming and Hygiene

- Despite their reputation, rats stay clean and rarely need baths, but they can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth.
- If your rat's teeth and nails seem too long, have them trimmed by a veterinarian.

General Health Conditions

- It is essential that a rat's teeth are kept in check to prevent Malocclusion.
- Healthy rats eat and drink at regular intervals.
- As rats are normally quite active and alert when awake, note should be taken if lethargic behaviour is evident.
- Any health problems should be dealt with by an exotic small animal veterinarian.



General Care Information

- Environment – Maintain a clean, quiet and dim habitat to avoid upsetting and confusing your rat's heightened senses.
- Grouping – Rats can be kept in same-sex groups of 5 if raised together, otherwise, house adult rats separately.



- Holding your rat – Always handle rats close to your body so they feel secure and enclosed; if your rat seems scared, it can be helpful to cover their eyes in order to stimulate an environment they are comfortable with. Always try to be seated when handling your rat so they do not have far to fall if they suddenly leap out of your arms.

- Temperature - Habitat should always be at room temperature and not exposed to any extremes caused by direct sunlight or drafts.
- Washing Hands – Always wash hands after handling rats and / or habitat contents to prevent the spread of any potential diseases your rat may be carrying such as Rat Bite Fever.

Information supplied by –



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