

# Rats



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## Overview

Rats make great pets because they're intelligent, sociable, and affectionate! They're also quiet, clean, and fairly easy to care for. There are hundreds of different breeds of rats, but "domestic" or pet rats have been bred for many years and therefore have different characteristics than wild rats!

Rats have an average lifespan of up to **3 years** and grow to be **14-18 inches long** including their tail! They will need a habitat that is at least **24"L x 24"W x 24"H** (2 cubic feet per rat) and it can be made of wire with a smooth surface at the bottom so their feet don't get caught!

They are **nocturnal** animals and like the have a variety of foods. You should feed your rat a balanced diet consisting of rat food pellets along with small amounts of veggies and fruits. Your rat should always have access to clean, fresh water in a water bottle as well!

Information from [petco.com](https://www.petco.com)

## Housing

Rats do great in the average household temperatures, but please be cautious of extreme temperature changes! Rats enjoy having multiple levels within their habitats when possible. They should be given 1-2 inches of bedding so they can hide and burrow. Decor like boxes and tubes should also be provided to help give them somewhere to hide and feel safe. Some rats even enjoy hammocks to sleep in! Your rat's home should be kept off of the ground and away from other pets that might be curious to meet them, but in a space where you will be able to pass by and interact with them on a regular basis!



## Behavior

Your rat should be active, alert, and social! They naturally like to be around people and don't do well when left alone. Rats can live in pairs, but make sure they are either spayed/neutered or in pairs of the same sex so you don't end up with more rats than you expected! These cute pets love to play and explore, so you can definitely "rat-proof" an area of your home and let them have some free time running around outside of their enclosure. They do like to chew on anything they come across, so make sure you keep them away from any wires, important documents, and plants!



## Handling

Make sure to go slow when handling your rat! Feeding them some treats from your hands will help them learn to trust you and associate you with snacks. When you pick them up, try to support their whole body. Never pick up a rat by their tail! It is painful for them and could result in serious injury. Rats can learn to ride on your shoulder, understand basic commands, and even do tricks! Use small treats to encourage your pet to come when you call, reach up to you, and even navigate mazes! The more you handle and interact with your rat, the friendlier and tamer they will be!