Possible Signs of Illness, Neglect, or Intentional Cruelty

Appearance of Animal

Fur standing on end, or wet, or matted; runny eyes and nose; thin; wet rump; evidence of fighting, such as bite marks around eyes, ears or rump; diarrhea.

Housing Conditions

Filthy cage; wet bedding and strong odor; lack of water and food (under bedding should be searched as rats will hoard food); overcrowded quarters; too hot a location.

Behavior
Unresponsive; animals fighting with each other.

Reporting Cruelty

Animal cruelty should be reported to the police department of the town in which the animal lives. Please leave your name and contact information so that a follow-up response may be made.

Additional Resources

Pet Rat Info
www.petrat.info

ASPCA
www.aspca.org/pet-care/small-pet-care/rat-care.aspx

Rat Guide
http://ratguide.com

For more information about animal cruelty, visit

www.humane.nh.gov

Be sure to view the **Interactive Presentation** on the **Welcome Page.**

CARING FOR RATS

Recommendations

Sponsored by

The Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals

Template Courtesy of Vermont Humane Federation

Basic Rat Care

- Rats average in length from 14-18 inches including the 7 inch tail.
- Life expectancy: Up to 3 years.
- Rats are very social with their own kind. They should be kept in pairs at the very minimum. A pair of females is recommended. Two males are fine if they were introduced at a very early age.
- Because pet rats are very intelligent, social animals, they can quickly become bored if enough activity and stimulation are not provided. This can result in undesirable activities such as excess chewing or gnawing, constant moving or rearrangement of accessories, or regular attempts to escape.

Housing

- Rats do best in cages with wire walls and a solid bottom. A 2'X2'X2' cage is the minimum for a pair of rats, but a larger place would work best. A ferret cage would also work for rats since they love to climb.
- Bedding of aspen shavings or recycled paper pellets MUST be provided.
- In the cage a place for the pet to hide, such as small boxes or flower pots should be provided. Rats love to run through "tunnels" like PVC tubing, or something made of strong, safe cardboard.
- Rats like to make nests, so shredded paper towels, or napkins should be provided for this purpose.
- Tree branches to climb on will be much appreciated, plus TOYS. They love toys, much like the ones you would buy for a parrot.
- Many rats love an exercise wheel. Get one that is solid, without wire rungs to catch their feet or tails.
- The habitat away should be located away from direct sunlight or drafty areas. They are **VERY** prone to colds and heat stroke.

Diet

- The main part of the diet should be rat blocks which are high quality pelleted chow formulated for rodents. One that lists soy meal as the main ingredient is best.
- It is recommended that rats get small portions of fruit and veggies every day: peas, broccoli, carrots, apples and bananas are good to start with.
- Rats love people food such as cooked pasta, small pieces of egg or chicken, or pizza crust.
- Rats should NOT be given chocolate, corn, candy, carbonated or caffeinated drinks, onions, or any kind of sticky food like peanut butter or toffee.
- Fresh water should be provided via a water bottle with drinking tube that attaches to the side of the cage.

Additional Recommendations

- The cage should be tidied up daily; with a scrub down once a week. Droppings, old food, and soiled bedding should be removed every day. The bedding should be replaced once a week after scrubbing the cage down with warm soapy water.
- Like every rodent, a rat's teeth never stop growing. So it is essential that they have something they can have available all day to gnaw on, such as untreated, unpainted pieces of wood, fruit tree branches (avoids splintering), dog biscuits or rawhide chews
- Once the rats have been hand tamed, they should be let out of their cages daily for at least an hour's supervised play time. This is necessary for maintaining a happy, healthy rat.