

Rat Info

Rat Information Center

Maybe you're wondering why someone would care so much about rats... maybe you want to begin to discover the wonderful world of rats... or maybe you have already made the decision to embark into the addictive world of rats and would like to begin to research the necessary proper care.

Education is crucial to achieving a world in which Kim's Ark is not necessary any longer. Please learn about your future pet BEFORE you take on the responsibility.

There are some links at the bottom of the page to get you started into the world of the animal Jack Hanna called, "the nearest thing to a dog you'll find in a small mammal."

Go here for a very detailed rat care sheet.

Or keep reading for a concise care sheet that lets you know the basics of rat care.

ABOUT RATS

Rats are very intelligent - they can learn their name, tricks, commands, and even be litter trained. They are very clean animals that clean themselves similar to cats. Rats are loyal, gentle, fun, and playful. They are the least likely rodent to bite. Unlike hamsters that mostly tolerate their owners, rats enjoy and demand human attention.

WHERE TO GET YOUR RATS

The pet store is one of the worst places to get a pet rat. They are usually unhealthy and often unsocialized. If you adopt a rat, the rescue can match you with a rat appropriate for your situation. They can tell you about the rat's personality, etc... If you don't want to adopt a rat find a good breeder. A good breeder socializes their babies from an early age to make sure they are friendly and love people. They can provide a pedigree ensuring your baby's relatives are healthy - spanning many generations. A good breeder breeds for health and personality first, but you can also find many colors and types that you would not find at a pet store.

CAGE REQUIREMENTS

ALWAYS keep rats in groups of two or more. They are social animals that need not only human attention but interaction with their own species. However, do not mix them with any other species - NO mice, gerbils, hamsters, etc... Rats are predators!

The minimum cage requirement for two rats is a 20 gallon fish tank. But bigger is always better. To get a general idea use the online Cage Calculator. The ideal cage is a wire cage (a solid floor is better because it's more comfortable and rattie hands and feet won't get caught) because it allows for climbing. Levels make it even better! You can create a level with a piece of plastic tied onto the cage with wire or put in a hammock (which can simply be a piece of fabric.)

Your rat does not need a wheel, but if you use one DON'T use a wire one. Your rat's tail or leg could get stuck in a wire wheel. Use a closed wheel like the Wodent Wheel. Or you can cover your wire wheel by interweaving it with duct tape (cover any sticky parts with bedding) or a strip of thin cardboard. Good toys to put in the cage is a PVC pipe, a cardboard box, or bird and ferret toys.

NEVER use Cedar or Pine bedding - it's TOXIC! And don't be fooled by kiln-dried Cedar or Pine bedding. It is controversial whether or not this actually makes it any safer as it doesn't seem to completely get rid of toxic hydrocarbons and phenols. So why risk your pet's health?

Stick to Aspen or a newspaper based bedding like CareFRESH. Other safe beddings include Yesterday's News, Gentle Touch, rabbit food/pellets, ground walnut shells, Cell Sorb Plus, Aspen Supreme, Eco-Bedding, etc... Kim's Ark uses CareFRESH and Harlan Tekfresh (Kim's Ark sells Harlan beddings in our Ark Store - cheaper than the store AND supports the rescue!) For a good article on why cedar and pine is bad and a whole list of safe bedding brands go to The Rat Fan Club's article.

DIET

Seeds should not be the primary diet. It should be supplemented with or replaced by lab blocks (a GREAT lab block is Harlan Teklad, which we sell in our Ark Store) and/or a quality low-protein dog food such as Nutro Natural Choice Lite or Innova Senior. Be sure to feed fresh fruits and veggies but NO orange rinds (it contains D-limonene) and not too much tomato. Water should be available at all times. Yogurt drops are great treats but not too many!

PLAYTIME

Rats love toys and playing with their humans. You can take your rat for a walk around town, let your rat run around free range in a "rat-safe" room or play "fishing for peas" - a rat favorite! (peas in a small container of water!) You can teach you rat tricks and commands. You could join a national rat club and show your potential ribbon winning rat. The possibilities are endless. Check out the links below for more information and how-to pages on making a custom harness and leash for your rat and even huge homemade cages!

HEALTH & VET CARE

Not only should you do your research on an animal before taking on their responsibility, you should find a veterinarian who treats rats BEFORE you need one. Kim's Ark uses Dr. Mertz in Boston. RMCA has a listing based on recommendations.

LINKS

Rats on the Hill - Comprehensive listing of links on all rat subjects from the best bedding to making your own cages.

Virginia's Rat Page - Comprehensive compilation of links.

PetRat.ca - Very comprehensive compilation of links on every subject.

Fat Rat Central - Great information site!

Rat Sauce

RattyRat.com RatPalace

Online Rat Message Boards

After you do some research and have some specific questions and/or want some personal accounts/experience, online message boards are perfect!

Rat Fan Club Forum

Rodent Fancy's Forums

Yahoo Groups RatList

Contact Kim's Ark at: kimsarkadopt@gmail.com

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