



Groupe Vétérinaire MONVET Inc.

RAT GUIDE





Neutering

Neutering can be performed in order to control the rat population and prevent aggression in males.



However, it is important to be aware that there are risks associated with anesthesia and surgery that are of more concern than those in dogs and cats.

Because of their small size, rats are more likely to suffer from, among other things, a drop in body temperature and blood pressure. Furthermore, these animals have a low tolerance for bandages, suture material, and other materials used to protect the surgical wound, thus predisposing them to infection and other complications.



RATS' NUTRITION

Food

The basis for this rodent's nutrition should be composed of good quality rat feed. It should contain between 5% and 25% of fat and between 12% and 27% of proteins. To be homogeneous, it must be free of grains, fruits, and vegetables. This homogeneity is desirable because it prevents the rat from sorting through its food, which could cause it to be deficient in or have an excess of certain nutrients.

Young rats should eat freely food specifically formulated for growth until the age of 6 months. However, when adult, it is preferable to control their portions to help prevent them from getting obese.

Males should consume 25 to 30 grams of food per day in order to maintain a healthy weight which is normally between 450g and 520g. Females normally weigh between 250g and 300g and should consume 15 to 20 grams of food per day. Approximately 75% of this amount should be made up of pellets.

Because the rat is an omnivore, meaning it consumes foods of animal and vegetable origin, their diet can be supplemented with fruits, vegetables, cheese, well cooked meat or eggs, nuts, and even small portions of home cooked meals, as long as they are prepared at home and not spicy. However, onions, garlic, coffee, tea, chocolate, alcohol, and sweet or salty snacks are to be avoided.

Since rats are gluttons, they should only be offered small portions of food at a time, especially if it is high in fat, as in the case of cheese or nuts. Fruits and vegetables, however, can be offered in larger amounts.

Water

Your rat should always have access to fresh and clean water, which should be changed every day, even several times a day, during the summer. Most rats drink from a bottle, so it is important to make sure that it is working properly. On the other hand, many rats prefer to drink from a bowl and some will even use the water that is in it to bathe themselves. If this is your rat's preferred method of drinking, then you have to use a bowl that is heavy enough so that it can't be tipped over.



TAKING CARE OF YOUR RAT

The claws

Although your rat's claws are very useful to help him climb, they can become very sharp and cause you discomfort when he climbs on you or when you handle him. To shorten them, you can use a small nail clipper or one made for cats. Getting your companion used to having his paws and claws handled at a young age, by rewarding him each time with his favorite fruits and vegetables, will make the procedure of trimming his nails more pleasurable for him and easier for you.



Cleanliness

Most rats will relieve themselves in the same spot. A small litter box can be placed in this area or the bottom of the cage can be completely covered with litter. Recycled paper is recommended as it is odorless and less dusty. Wood chips, on the other hand, are to be avoided. Indeed, they are dusty and emit strong odors when in contact with urine, which is irritating to rats' respiratory tract. Cedar chips are even toxic and should never be used.

Feces and urine should be removed everyday and the cage should be emptied once a week and thoroughly cleaned. Soiled blankets should be replaced twice a week.



TAKING CARE OF YOUR RAT

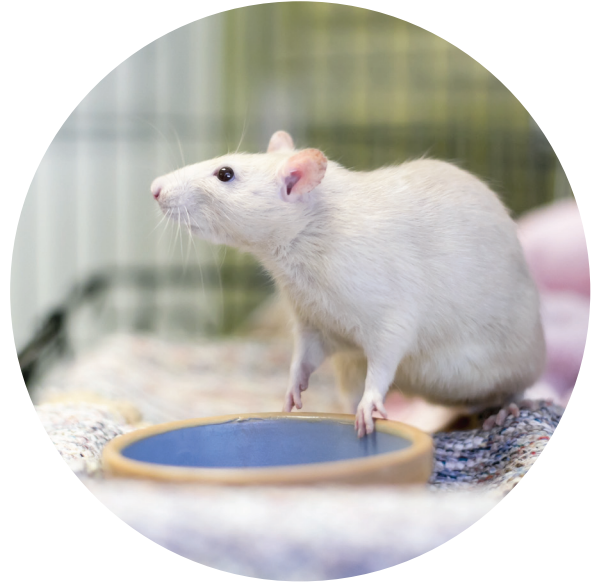
The cage

Rats are very agile and enjoy climbing. They prefer tall cages that have multiple levels. The spaces between the cage bars must be small to prevent them from fitting their heads through them and getting stuck.

It is important for them to have several hiding places to rest and store their favorite foods. Toys should also be added to encourage exploration and foraging. A cardboard box containing shredded paper where food can be hidden should suffice. An exercise wheel can also be added, but avoid those with bars wide enough that their fingers can get caught in.

Rats need to have physical activity, so it is important for them to spend at least one hour outside of their cage everyday. They can be left to roam freely in the home, but only under strict watch. Since these little creatures love to gnaw and chew, it is important to prevent access to electrical wires. Furthermore, care must be taken to prevent them from hiding in places that are difficult to reach, such as in the mechanism of a sofa-bed for example.

Lastly, rats are very sensitive to heat. Thus, their cage should be placed in a well ventilated area while not being directly in front of an air current. If the room temperature exceeds 25°C, a ceramic tile or frozen water bottle wrapped in cloth can be placed in their cage so they can cool off.



Coat maintenance

Rats do not require any particular maintenance when it comes to their fur. However, should they get soiled, a bath can be given using unscented baby shampoo. It is important to rinse them thoroughly with warm water, while avoiding getting their head wet, and that they be dried completely afterwards. However, even if, as previously mentioned, some rats enjoy bathing, particularly during warmer periods, others panic when wet. If this is the case for yours, a wet cloth can be used to bathe him instead.



PARTICULARITIES IN RATS

Rats have teeth that constantly grow (hypsodont) and others that eventually stop. This refers to the incisors and molars respectively. In order for these teeth to wear properly, it is important that rats' diet be rich in fiber and that they have food to chew on, such as branches from an apple tree for example. However, it is important to prevent them from chewing on their cage bars to avoid a tooth fracture.

Rats are sociable and enjoy the company of their fellow specie. So, it is recommended to keep them in groups of 2 or more. Nonetheless, conflicts leading to serious injury can still occur.

Therefore, when introducing a newcomer, it is essential to do so under safe conditions. To that end, put the newcomer in another cage placed nearby and in the field of vision of the other rat(s) first. Doing so allows them to meet without risking injury and allows you to determine if they get along before putting them together. If this is not the case, they should be put in separate cages.

After a week of observation, they can be in contact with each other for an additional week, still under constant supervision, and those that get along can live in the same cage. Peace reigns when they sleep together and groom each other for most of their day. Several food bowls, a sufficient amount of water, and numerous hiding spots are necessary to meet the needs of each cage mate.



Be careful however if there are males and females! Rats can reproduce as early as 8 weeks of age, so avoid putting rats of the opposite sex together at this age or have them sterilized first.

Although rats are sociable and adventurous, it is important to remember that they are prey animals, so they can be easily scared and nervous in the presence of strangers or new pets. Thus, gentleness and patience are required to tame yours, as well as strict watch on its interactions with dogs and cats. Fortunately, some rats will develop a friendly relationship with them.



PARTICULARITIES IN RATS

When should you consult your veterinarian?

Because rats have a short lifespan of 2 to 3 years on average, a veterinary exam should be done at least once a year in order to ensure that yours is in good health.

My rat is tearing red, should I be worried?

Healthy rats can secrete small quantities of a red liquid from their eyes and their nose. This color is due to a pigment called porphyrin. However, if the secretions appear suddenly and in larger amounts, this can be an indicator of stress or sickness. In that case, a veterinarian should be consulted.



Frequent health problems

Respiratory problems are common in this species. Numerous bacteria, viruses, and irritants present in the air can be causative agents. You need to contact a veterinarian as soon as respiratory symptoms, such as sneezing and coughing, develop in order to start treatment as soon as possible.

Rats can also develop tumors. The most common one is the fibroadenoma of the mammary gland. This tumor, which is often benign, takes the form of a mass located under the skin that gradually grows, and can sometimes reach to a rather impressive size. The detection of a cutaneous mass is another reason requiring a veterinary consultation, as its origin will be determined and a treatment plan can be established.

The following behaviors can be signs of pain or illness requiring an **urgent** intervention:

- The animal has a decreased appetite or refuses to eat;
- There is no urine or stool production;
- He hides or is immobile for several hours;
- He has difficulty moving around, is unable to move, or one of his paws is deformed;
- He extends his neck constantly to breathe.



If any of these problems develops, you need to consult a veterinarian **immediately!**

HEALTH RECORD



MEDICAL HISTORY

DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	DIAGNOSIS

Deworming treatments

A dewormer is recommended following the adoption of a new pet or for those who have access outdoors.

DEWORMING

DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	FECAL ANALYSIS	TREATMENT

HEALTH RECORD



TESTS/RESULTS

DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	TESTS	RESULTS

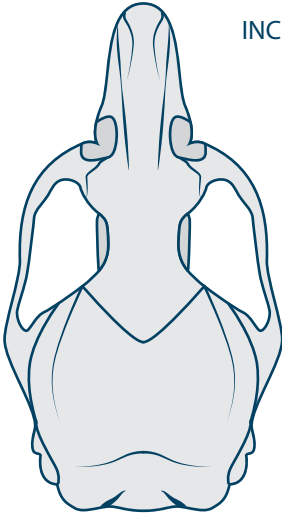
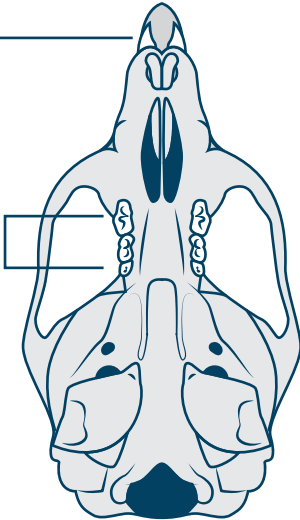
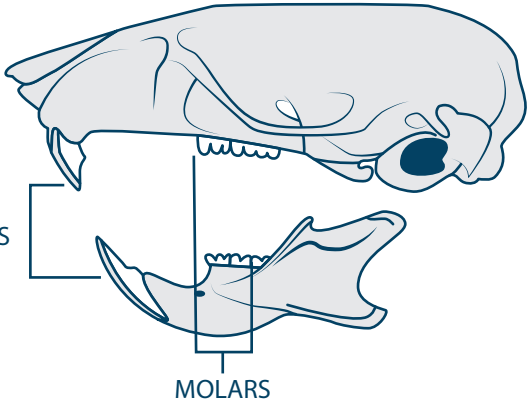
WEIGHT CHART

DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	WEIGHT	FOOD	QUANTITY/DAY	COMMENTS

HEALTH RECORD



DENTAL CHART

<div><div><p>BOTTOM VIEW</p></div><div><p>TOP VIEW</p></div></div>		<div><p>SIDE VIEW</p><p>MAXILLARY (upper jaw)</p><p>MANDIBULAR (lower jaw)</p></div>	
DATE OF TEETH TRIMMING (MM-DD-YYYY)	IMAGING: RADIOGRAPHY OR CT-SCAN (YES/NO)	TRIMMED TEETH	COMMENTS



Groupe Vétérinaire MONVET Inc.

**Medecine | Hospitalization | Standard or laser surgery
Dentistry | Digital Radiology | Ultrasound | On Site Laboratory
Physiotherapy | Osteopathy | Acupuncture | Nutrition | Boarding**

Certain services are not available for all animal species nor in all our locations.

Working together for animal health and wellbeing.



Montreal
(Anjou)



Boucherville



Beloeil



Ste-Julie



Montreal
(Rivière-des-Prairies)



Montreal
(Pointe-aux-Trembles)



Montreal
(Saint-Michel)



Longueuil



**CLINIQUE VÉTÉRAIRE
DE LA RUE PRINCIPALE INC.**

Membre du Groupe Vétérinaire MonVet Inc.

Saint-Amable

WWW.MONVET.COM