

## RAT CARE

The common pet rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is a small rodent available in a variety of colours and types. They can make good pets due to their intelligence and social nature, and if handled from a young age can be easily trained. They can live between 2.5 – 3.5 years if looked after correctly.

### HOUSING

- Rats should be housed in a large glass or wire enclosure with good ventilation and a layer of sawdust or shavings.
- A nest box should also be provided as a retreat, with paper or hay bedding.
- Rats are very active and inquisitive animals so within the cage, nest material, wheels and toys should be provided. However, be aware that toys will be quickly destroyed, so replaceable cardboard rolls and boxes often provide the best entertainment.
- Wheels should also be of a solid type to prevent injuries.
- Temperature – ensure that the tank is kept out of direct sunlight as these enclosures will easily overheat.
- The tank should be cleaned out at least twice a week to help prevent disease.

### COMPANIONS

- Rats are social animals, so will be happiest in a single-sex group or as a breeding pair.
- However, entire (un-neutered) males may fight, so castration may be required to reduce aggression if opposite sexes are kept together.

### WHAT TO FEED

- Rats are naturally omnivorous, eating whatever they can find in the wild.
- In captivity, they may be fed commercial rodent pellets (mixes) with additional fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Small portion of hay to be placed in the cage daily.
- 1 large handful of vegetables and some fruit daily.
- 1 table spoon of rat pellets to be given in TOTAL to be scattered in the cage **DO NOT OVER FEED** this can result in obesity.
- Fresh water in all water bottles daily
- Twice a week give treats: cottage cheese, or ½ table spoon of rat or hamster mix, fruit scattered in the pen.
- Beware overfeeding sugary “treats” as obesity and dental problems are commonly seen.

- Water should always be freely available via a drinking bottle and changed daily.

### **NEUTERING**

- Male rats may be castrated in order to reduce fighting, or prevent reproduction

### **ANNUAL HEALTH CHECKS**

We recommend annual health checks every year for pet rats as medical problems are more easily treated if detected at an early stage – **you can register for automatic reminders**

### **INSURANCE**

We highly recommend that you take out a pet insurance policy. For a monthly fee your pet can receive the best treatment at an affordable cost. There is normally an excess to pay for each condition then after that costs are covered up to a set limit. Once you have the policy, please provide us with a copy of your insurance details. There are a lot of different companies and policies available and we suggest you contact a number of them for information- we have a leaflet advising what to look out for. Our advice is to choose a policy which provides cover for chronic illness for the life of your pet. If this policy is too much for you then the best cover you can afford will provide piece of mind in an accident or emergency.