

Rat Housing

Habitat Type

Rats are active creatures. They need space to run, stretch up on their hind legs, and climb. They're highly curious and strongly motivated to explore. They can easily squeeze through gaps in their cage, especially young rats. Habitats with plastic or metal wire siding and solid bottoms, aquariums with mesh tops, and multi-level ferret cages are all suitable housing for rats. Habitats with wire floors should be avoided as they can lead to foot injuries. Rats are clean animals and they prefer to keep their toilet areas separate from their sleeping, resting, and feeding areas.

Location

Temperature and humidity are important to consider when deciding where to place their habitat. Housing rats in hot or cold conditions, too damp, too dry, or without ventilation can cause discomfort and increase the chances of them becoming ill. The area where they're housed should not be kept in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.

Rats have a very good sense of smell and should be kept away from strong artificial smells such as air fresheners and smoke. Rats are naturally most active at night and are very sensitive to light; bright light can cause stress and harm their eyes, particularly for albino rats. Their housing should not be near high pitched sounds, ultrasound, or long term and unpredictable sudden bursts of noise. Rats can hear sounds of higher pitch than humans (ultrasound) and extreme noise can be stressful. In extreme cases, excessive noise could cause them to have a seizure.

Bedding

The inside of the enclosure should be lined with several inches of absorbent bedding.

Good

- Carefresh
- Shredded Paper
- Shredded Paper Towel
- Aspen Shavings
- Dust-Free Pellets

Avoid

- Pine Shaving
- Cedar Shaving
- Corn Cob Litter
- Cat Litter



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Set-Up & Accessories

Food Dish: It is helpful if the food dish is hard to flip over, since your rat will be burrowing around and could flip over a lightweight bowl.

Water Bottle: A water bottle that attaches to the side of the habitat is a must.

Hiding Place: Rats like enclosed spaces to sleep and hide, such as a small box, igloo, or flower pot. Rats have an excellent sense of touch, preferring to hug walls rather than enter open spaces where they cannot hide.

Toys: You can buy rat toys or you use things like toilet paper tubes, sections cut from a cardboard egg carton, PVC pipes, branches, or ladders.

Exercise Wheel: Your rat will need a place to run, a running wheel is the best solution. Make sure to use a solid wheel without rungs on it.

Chewing Items: Rats need to chew to keep their teeth from overgrowing. An untreated, unpainted piece of hardwood, twig, or cardboard is an appropriate chew toy. Avoid anything made of soft plastic.

Cleaning

It's important to establish a good cleaning routine for your rats habitat. One way you can reduce mess is by litter training them. Keeping your rat cages clean is vital for the health and well-being of your rats. Avoid using harsh cleaners like bleach or ammonia. A white vinegar solution and gentle soap with hot water are good ways to clean your rat's habitat.

Daily: Daily spot cleaning should occur to remove soiled bedding and yesterday's food and water.

Weekly: Once per week you should give the habitat a more thorough cleaning. All bedding should be removed and replaced. The habitat floor, food and water containers, and other cage accessories should get washed. Be sure everything is completely dry before replacing bedding and adding accessories back.

Monthly: It is recommended that the entire enclosure is completely scrubbed down.

