

# RODENTS



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### Physical Identification

Adult female and male rats typically weigh 350 to 450 grams and 450 to 650 grams, respectively. They are about 23 to 28 centimetres long without the tail. Male rats are usually larger than females. Pet rats are available in several colours and coat patterns due to specialized breeding. The common colour variations include brown, black, tan, grey, and white with both lighter and darker shades as well.

### Feeding

Rats and wild mice are opportunist omnivorous eaters. That means they will eat whatever they can find. In most cases, this includes grains, fruits and vegetables, seeds and nuts and any other edibles they might find. Although rats prefer to eat what they find, they will hunt in occasion, catching bugs and other small animals.

### Lifecycle

The average life span of rats is about 2.5 to 3.5 years. Breeding ages is about 4 to 5 weeks and their gestation period is from 21 to 23 days. The normally produce a litter size of 6 to 12 young that wean for 21 approximately days.

### Harbourage

Rats live in burrows or within the fabric of buildings and other structures, and they rely on the availability of suitable harbourage (shelter and nesting area), food and water in order to thrive. Rats are capable of exploiting a wide range of different habitats and situations.

Gnawing is part of the innate behaviour of rodents and is not necessarily associated with the search for food. Rodent incisors are continually growing and have to be kept in check. Their gnawing behaviour often results in damage to various materials. They are good climbers and reasonable swimmers. These characteristics need to be taken into account when considering measures to exclude these animals.

Rats are nocturnal, most active during the evenings, although in certain circumstances can be active during daylight.

## Health Risk

Rat bites and scratches can result in disease and rat-bite fever. Rat urine is responsible for the spread of leptospirosis, which can result in liver and kidney damage. It can also be contracted through handling or inhalation of scat. Complications include renal and liver failure, as well as cardiovascular problems.



Norwegian rat



House mouse



Roof rat