

Rat Behavior Cheat Sheet

Rat and Mouse Club of America rmca.org

Rat Guide ratguide.com

Eadie's House eadieshouse.org

- rats require **two seconds** to mate - even through cage bars. Never house males and females together 'just for a moment.'
- **never** pick up a rat by the tail - the tail may deglove (and it hurts!)
- **if you see red discharge** from a rat's nose or eyes, the substance is usually porphyrin, not blood. The discharge is produced by a special gland behind the rat's eyes. Overproduction of this discharge can be caused by **stress or illness**. In short, rat snot.
- rats regulate temperature through their tails and ears and can develop heatstroke at temperatures over 80 degrees F. A **very hot** rat will lie on its back to release excess heat through the soles of his/her feet.
- a very stressed or very happy rat may **chatter or grind its teeth together**. This is properly called 'bruxing,' and may also cause the eyes to slightly bulge or vibrate for a moment. Do not panic - bruxing is perfectly normal, (although it looks pretty strange).
- a **female rat in heat**, (approx. every five days), may act skittish, not wish to be touched on her rump, and may 'vibrate' her ears very quickly. Once again, this behavior looks strange, but is perfectly normal.
- Rats with dark-colored eyes see extremely poorly, rats with ruby or pink eyes are essentially blind. Keep out of direct sunlight/bright lighting to protect their sensitive eyes. Rats may 'weave' their heads from side to side in order to better focus their vision, and 'see' with their whiskers, nose, and ears.
- Rats are predators, and will eat smaller animals, including mice, gerbils, hamsters, and small birds. A good rule of thumb would be to never place a rat in a situation that you would not trust a ferret.