



# Rat Care Guide



Oxbow offers this basic care guide to help you keep your pet rat healthy and happy. Read below to learn what to feed your rat, as well as other important facts that will make you a confident pet owner.



## Feeding Your Rat

Your rat is an omnivore, which means he eats both plant and animal material. In fact, rats are very similar to humans in what and how they eat. Like humans, they will eat when they are bored and can be prone to obesity, so it's important to provide healthy foods in proper amounts.

## Fortified Food

A complete fortified food is a healthier option than a mix that contains a variety of seeds, nuts and dried fruits. Too frequently, pets will pick out favorite pieces from a mix and leave healthy pieces behind. The best kibble contains all-natural grass and whole grain ingredients, with a shape ideal for nibbling to promote healthy teeth. To optimize your pet's health, look for an age-specific food like Oxbow's Essentials Adult Rat Food and Essentials Mouse & Young Rat Food. Designed especially for rats, these complete foods contain a balance of protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Proper food will improve the longevity of your pet.



If you need to change your pet's diet, it's important to gradually convert to the new food over the space of one or two weeks to avoid digestive upset.

## Block Selection

- Choose an age-appropriate food especially for rats. Oxbow designed Adult Rat Food for rats over 6 months of age and Mouse & Young Rat Food specifically for rats under 6 months.
- Avoid mixes with nuts, corn, seeds and fruit. Rats have a habit of selecting these tempting morsels and leaving the healthy pellets.

## Hay

Supply grass hay to stimulate natural foraging activity to help in the prevention of obesity. Hay is an excellent source of nesting material. Use the Oxbow Hay Variety Guide found on every bag to help determine your pet's taste and texture preferences. Mix and match amongst the following, all-natural, farm-fresh grass hays: Western Timothy, Orchard Grass, Oat Hay, Botanical Hay and Organic Meadow Hay.



## Treats and Veggies

Treats are a great way to bond with your rat. You love giving treats and he loves eating them! However, the main purpose of a treat should be to encourage interaction between you and your pet. Treats are also a wonderful training aid.

Rats do not need a steady supply of sweet treats like yogurt drops or seed sticks. Foods such as pretzels, cookies and cereals are too high in calories and starch, and can lead to obesity. Offer all-natural treats only after your pet eats basic foods.

Rats can also have fruits and vegetables, but they should be considered a treat and fed a tablespoon or less every day. Greens such as romaine, kale and parsley are good choices for your rat. Apples, strawberries, bananas, peas and squash can also be fed for added variety. As with any new food, be sure to introduce new vegetables or fruits slowly to avoid upsetting your rat's stomach and causing diarrhea.

Oxbow makes a number of healthy treats for rats, including: Organic Barley Biscuits and Simple Rewards.



Rats are intelligent and social, making them great pets.

# All About Rats

Rats can't burp, so avoid feeding gas-causing vegetables such as cabbage.

## Rat Behaviors

Domesticated rats are very clean and docile. When handled gently, they rarely bite. Pet rats are very social animals that love the company of others. Young rats, for instance, like to chase each other and wrestle. Rats love to interact with people, and each has its own unique personality. Some like to cuddle on your neck and enjoy an occasional ride on your shoulder. Others are constant balls of energy and are always playing.

Rats are very intelligent and can be trained to respond to their name, use a litter box, climb ropes, and respond to clicker training. Entertainment is a rat's middle name. They love to explore and can be taught tricks such as "fetch." Fill a box with one of Oxbow's grass hays and hide your rat's favorite treat inside. Rats will have fun for hours searching and finding the treat treasure. Like all pets, rats respond to patience and love during training sessions. They make great pets!

## Housing Your Rat

Choose a wire cage with a solid bottom that allows your rat enough room for climbing and playing. The cage should be large enough to accommodate feeding supplies, a large exercise wheel, and a hay habitat such as Timothy Club Tunnel or Bungalow for play. Two sources of clean water should always be available.

Your rat's cage will need bedding, too. Oxbow's Eco-Straw™, consisting of 100% wheat straw, is an ideal litter for rats. Avoid aromatic cedar and pine shaving beddings. They contain resins that could irritate your rat's skin and lungs. Grass hay, newspaper, paper towels, facial tissue, old mittens and socks are excellent nesting materials for rats.

### Make sure you have these supplies for your rat:

- Fortified age-specific food:  
Oxbow Essentials Mouse & Young Rat (rats under 6 months of age)  
Oxbow Essentials Adult Rat (rats over 6 months)
- Oxbow treats for healthy bonding and enrichment
- Water bottle and heavy water dish
- Heavy food bowl
- Large wire care with solid flooring
- Wheel, tube and hay habitat such as Oxbow's Timothy Club Bungalow or Tunnel for hiding and playing
- Oxbow's Eco-Straw™ litter

Rats are very intelligent and love to play, so make sure your pet's home is fun and enriching. Provide tubes, ropes, and tunnels as toys. Your pet will enjoy tossing and carrying around his playthings.

## Your Rat's Health

Many rat health problems are related to nutrition and digestive issues, dental issues or obesity. Contact your veterinarian if you notice the following symptoms:

- Wet or soiled tail
- Blood in the urine
- Sneezing or wheezing
- Overgrown front teeth
- Bald patches in the fur
- Lumps on the body
- Sores on the feet
- Hunched in the corner
- Abnormal eating or drinking

Regular veterinarian visits are a crucial part of keeping your pet healthy and happy. At each visit, your pet will be weighed and examined. Be prepared to answer basic questions about the animal's diet, behavior and health. If you have questions or concerns, make a list ahead of time so you'll remember what to ask.

For more information about rats, read Oxbow's Small Paw Prints newsletter at [www.oxbowanimalhealth.com](http://www.oxbowanimalhealth.com).



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