

## Common Illnesses

**Diarrhoea** – Overfeeding with green food is a common cause of diarrhoea. If your rat has diarrhoea, stop feeding green food immediately and allow it only to eat its Reggie Rat mix. If the diarrhoea persists, you should take your rat to the vet.

**Constipation** – Conversely, if there is a lack of droppings in the cage, and your rat has a hunched appearance, it may have constipation. Feeding a small amount of green vegetables may relieve your rat but, if there is no improvement, take your rat to the vet.

**Colds** – Rats can catch colds from humans, so if you have a cold you should keep the handling of your rat to a minimum. Your rat will have a runny nose and sneeze if he has a cold, and should be kept in a warm room. Sneezing can also be indicative of an allergy.

**Overgrown Teeth** – Rats' teeth continue to grow throughout their life. Rats need to gnaw to keep their teeth in trim. If there is a chipped tooth, or their teeth do not meet properly, this may cause overgrown teeth and they must be trimmed by your vet.

**Overgrown Nails** – Nails can also become overgrown and should be trimmed by a vet to ensure your rat is comfortable.

Always consult a vet if you have ANY reason for concern.

## Rat Profile

Latin Name:	<b>Rattus norvegicus (Brown or Norwegian Rat)</b>
Female:	<b>Doe</b>
Male:	<b>Buck</b>
Young:	<b>Pups</b>
Life span:	<b>2-4 years</b>
Litter Size:	<b>6-16 pups or kittens</b>
Birth weight:	<b>5-7gms</b>
Eyes open:	<b>10-16 days</b>
Gestation period:	<b>20-22 days</b>
Average weight:	<b>Male 400-800gms Female 400-800gms</b>
Sexual maturity:	<b>Male 6-10 weeks Female 6-10 weeks</b>
Weaning age:	<b>3-4 weeks</b>
Diet:	<b>Omnivorous</b>



PROMOTING THE WELL-BEING OF SMALL ANIMALS

Supreme Petfoods is dedicated to the feeding and well-being of small animals.

Supreme specialises in small animal nutrition and each product is a complete food, individually formulated to fulfil the nutritional requirements of that species.

All Supreme foods are a unique blend of selected high-quality ingredients to give a complete and balanced diet.

Over 1 million small animals worldwide are fed with Supreme products every day, so you can be confident you have chosen the right food for your pet.

If you would like any more information on Reggie Rat or any other products in the Supreme range, please contact us:

**Supreme**

Supreme Petfoods Ltd  
Supreme House  
The Briars  
Waterberry Drive  
Waterlooville  
Hampshire, PO7 7YH

Tel: (023) 9236 9000  
Fax: (023) 9236 4800  
E-mail: russel@suppet.co.uk

[www.russelrabbit.com](http://www.russelrabbit.com)



# Reggie's Guide to Rats



**Supreme**

## Introduction

This leaflet includes information on how to care for your rat including feeding, housing and common illnesses.

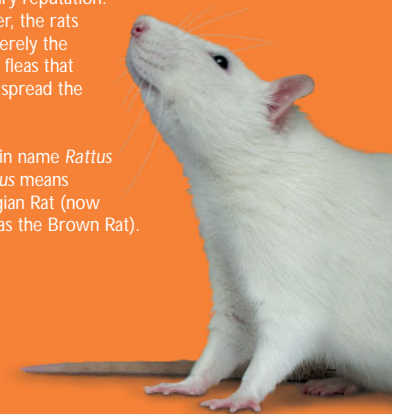
Rats are very intelligent and agile animals and deserve consideration and commitment when being looked after as a pet.

## History of Rats

Rats belong to the rodent family. There are over 80 different species of rat throughout the world. The most common, Black and Brown rats are thought to have originated from Asia. They managed to stow away in merchant ships and other means of transport, which carried them across the world.

It is thought that the Black Rat reached Europe in the 4th Century and caused outbreaks of the Plague in the 6th and 7th Centuries. The famous spread of the Black Death (or Bubonic Plague) in the 1300s earned the rat its unsavoury reputation. However, the rats were merely the hosts of fleas that actually spread the disease.

The Latin name *Rattus norvegicus* means Norwegian Rat (now known as the Brown Rat).



## Colours/Patterns/Markings

There are many different coloured rats, with varying markings and coat types. The most common colours include Black, Mink, Champagne and Albino. The "hooded" pattern is quite common, ie: the coat is white and the face and head are coloured. Other patterns include Irish, Berkshire, Capped and Variegated. There are 3 different coat types that can be combined with any pattern or colour – Smooth haired, Rex (which has curly hair and whiskers) and Hairless rat.

## Nutritional Requirements

In their natural habitat rats will scavenge for their food and will eat almost anything. Rats are omnivores and need protein to keep them in good condition.

Rats need a good quality rat mix that does not contain nuts or seeds as these can cause spots and skin problems. Too much green food will cause diarrhoea. If you feed your rat human food, remember to avoid foods that are high in calories, sugary or contain too much fat.

## Feeding Your Rat

### Reggie Rat

**Reggie Rat** is a complete diet which means that all the nutrients your rat requires are in one handy bag. **Reggie Rat** has been formulated to keep rats fit and healthy. It contains protein (for growth), carbohydrates (for energy) and vitamins and minerals (to keep teeth and bones strong). Feed only the recommended daily amount for your rat (approx 25g per day), to avoid over-feeding, selective feeding or obesity. You must check where your rat hoards food and remove any old and stale food from those areas.

Rats need feeding once a day, every day. A good quality, heavy, earthenware food bowl is essential to keep the food dry and clean, and prevent the rat from tipping the food on to the floor of the cage. Their bowls must be cleaned after every use.

### Reggie Rat Chik 'n' Chip Treats

A tasty mix of crunchy sticks, bursting with the flavours of chicken and potato that your rat will love. A pleasurable treat that is both wholesome and fun and helps wear down your rat's teeth.



## Changing your rat's diet

If you are not feeding **Reggie Rat** food at present but would like to try it, you must introduce it gradually into your rat's diet. Mix about one quarter of the new food with three quarters of the old food on the first day and then gradually increase the new food and decrease the old food over a 10-day period. This should make sure that your rat has no tummy upsets.

## Selective feeding

You should try to ensure that your rat eats all his food from a very young age by carefully calculating the daily requirement. However, if you notice that your rat tends to leave some of the ingredients in coarse mixes, reduce the amount you give him until he is eating all of it. Then slowly increase the amount again to the recommended daily allowance.

Ensure there is fresh drinking water available at all times.

## Looking After Your Rat

### Housing

Rats can be housed in a wire cage with a plastic base, a plastic rat home or a large vivarium with a well-ventilated cover. Wooden cages should not be used as rats will chew their way out. The important thing to remember is that a rat home can never be too big, as they love to explore and exercise. Multi-level cages are a good idea as they add interest for the rat. They love to hide and climb and will enjoy playing with a sisal rope or large rat wheel. A **Reggie Rat Hammock** is the perfect place for them to rest and play above the ground.

Rats are best kept indoors and careful thought should be given to where your rat's home is situated. The temperature in the room should be constant, away from direct sunlight and draughts, and out of the reach of any other pets. A rat's hearing is extremely sensitive so he should be situated away from loud noises such as a stereo.

## Cage Hygiene

Cages should be cleaned out on a regular basis. This is especially important in warmer weather to reduce odours and in the winter to ensure your rat is clean and cosy.

## Cleaning Spray

**Keep It Clean** is a cage and hutch cleaner that eliminates pet odours, germs and bacteria (which can harm your pet). **Keep It Clean** can be sprayed on the bedding as well as inside the cage or hutch ensuring that your pet's home is truly clean at all times.



Keeping your rat warm and cosy at night is very important. You also need bedding that is absorbent which makes cleaning easier for you. Untreated, unthreshed straw should not be used as it can scratch your pet. It is also recommended that you provide bedding that is dust extracted, as this reduces irritation to the eyes, nose and respiratory system.

## Russel Bedding

**Russel Bedding** is made from the highest quality barley straw, chopped for extra comfort. It fluffs up to provide a natural, warm bedding that is ideal for your rat. It is also treated with a non-toxic cleaning agent to eliminate pet odours, germs and bacteria, and has been specially processed to ensure it is completely free of dust (many animals are allergic to dust).

## Supreme Choice Woodshavings

A high quality, fresh bedding which is highly absorbent and dust extracted. Available in a compressed pack and is good value for money.

## Supreme Science – Carefresh

Alternatively there is **Supreme Science – Carefresh**, which is even more absorbent than traditional bedding, and eliminates pet odours. It is dust free and hypo-allergenic and is, therefore, particularly suitable if your rat has any sort of allergy.

## Exercise

You need to provide a large, secure run for daily exercise. This can be free-standing or attached to the cage. An idea is to use a large cardboard box and put bedding on the bottom. Put in some toilet roll tubes and, as rats also love climbing, you can hang up a piece of sisal rope. Hide a piece of apple wood for him to gnaw and you will see how much fun he can have in his own exercise yard. However, you should always keep an eye on him whilst he is in his play area.

If you provide a wheel in the cage so your rat can exercise, make sure that it is big enough for him. He must not have to bend his back whilst inside. Also ensure that it has a solid floor and not rungs as they can cause injuries to the feet and tail.

Although rats often sleep during the day, they are really energetic and will exercise for 3-4 hours a night, and will enjoy spending the evenings with you!



## Accessories

Rats are naturally very active and inquisitive animals. They like to keep themselves busy and, when allowed, spend the majority of their time running around and investigating their surroundings. Their natural instincts are to explore and socialise. It only takes a few items to create an exciting playground for your pet.

Piles of logs (natural wood – willow, beech, hazel or apple) make platforms for them to explore or rest under. Rats will chew the wood and this will help keep their teeth in trim.

Feeding time for a domestic animal is often over in minutes whereas, in the wild, feeding takes most of the day as they forage for their favourite foods. By hiding food and the occasional treat your rat will be forced to hunt for his food – this will keep him occupied for many happy hours and prevent boredom.

**Reggie Rat Hammock** – Hung from your rat's cage, this hammock will create a play area he will love! Check out the **'Furry Fun'** accessories range from Supreme Petfoods.

## Handling Your Rat

Before attempting to handle your rat, make sure he is awake and alert or he might be scared and try to bite you. Talking to your rat makes him aware that you are close by and wanting

to socialise. Always approach your rat calmly and gently. Once your rat knows you are near, place a closed fist in front of it and allow him to approach. If he is confident and appears interested, slowly unclench your fist and open your hand to allow him to crawl on to your palm. If he does not approach you, gently scoop him up and cup him in the palms of your two hands to ensure he is safe and won't be dropped. Never pick a rat up by his tail.



## Companionship

Rats are very social animals and will become unhappy if left alone, so keeping them in pairs is best. Two males or two females from the same litter will get on extremely well and be great company for each other. Rats enjoy "play-fighting", but if you introduce an older rat to another rat, they may fight seriously and cause injury.

Don't keep a male and a female together unless you want to breed from them.