

Brown rat

Rattus norvegicus

🇫🇷 Rat · 🇩🇪 Wanderratte



REGULATIONS

Companion animal (not CITES-listed)

Subject to Swiss Animal Welfare Ordinance (TSchV/OPAn): housing, care and enrichment required. Social housing: highly social species—keep in groups; OPAn requires appropriate social contact and enrichment (Art. 4 ff., Annex 2). Release into the wild is prohibited (potentially invasive). Not CITES; no federal mandatory marking.



LIFESPAN

2–3.5 years



ADULT WEIGHT

250–500 g



LIFESTYLE

Nocturnal



BODY TEMPERATURE

35.9–37.5 °C



SEXUAL MATURITY

42–56 days



GESTATION

19–23 days



LITTER / CLUTCH SIZE

6–12



Habitat & environment



Type — Multi-level cage, sheltered from drafts



Substrate — Towels, DryBed®/VetBed®, Toftbo® mats, yoga mat or blanket. Plant-based bedding: Nulldodor® (fir wood), hemp, recycled paper. Avoid cedar and pine.



Equipment

- Hammocks
- PVC tubes
- Ropes
- Plastic nest box / flower pot
- Food bowl
- Heavy water bowl (refresh daily)



Technical parameters



Ambient

20–24 °C

Comfort range 20–24 °C; tolerance 18–26 °C; avoid >28 °C



Humidity

40–70 %



Lighting



Photoperiod — 12:12 h day/night cycle



Behaviour

Very social, intelligent and hardy. Quickly bonds with its owner.



Social life — Must live in a group (social animal). Rarely bites.



Activity cycle — Very active, especially at night.



Enrichment

- Social interaction
- Puzzle toys
- Out-of-cage time
- Hammocks and ropes
- PVC tunnels



Nutrition

Vegetarian with omnivorous tendencies. Fast transit: several meals per day. Pellets or extruded food (>20% protein, <5% fat).

Daily base

Pellet

Brands: Oxbow, Supreme Science, Beaphar

★ Treats (occasional)

Animal protein (occasionally). Remove uneaten fruit after 12 hrs.



White Fish

White fish fillet



Hard-boiled Egg White



Soy Milk



White Meat



TO AVOID



Seed Mix

Predisposes to obesity



Table Scraps



Citrus



Cabbage

Cabbages / Brassicas



Potato

Raw



Pear



Melon



Chocolate



Health & prevention



Preventive medicine

Heatstroke risk above 28 °C. Provide a cool spot during hot weather.
Deworming if necessary.



Vaccination

None



Surgery & neutering

Early spaying (female, at 4 months) recommended to prevent mammary tumours. Castration (male) for behavioural reasons.
Hormonal implant possible.



Common conditions

Chronic respiratory disease (CRD)

SYMPTOMS Sneezing, nasal/ocular porphyrin, dyspnea, wheezing, exercise intolerance

CAUSE Infectious complex (Mycoplasma pulmonis, Streptococcus, Bordetella, Pasteurella) plus irritants (ammonia, dust)

PREVENTION Bonne ventilation, litière peu poussiéreuse (p. ex. chanvre/papier), nettoyage régulier, quarantaine des nouveaux rats (min. 2-3 semaines), éviter la surpopulation

Mammary tumors

SYMPTOMS Subcutaneous ventral/lumbar masses, sometimes rapid growth

CAUSE Mammary adenomas/adenocarcinomas; hormonal influence

PREVENTION Contrôle de l'obésité, sélection responsable des reproducteurs; discussion sur stérilisation préventive selon lignée/risque

Cutaneous abscesses

SYMPTOMS Warm, painful swelling; may fistulate with thick pus

CAUSE Bite/trauma; opportunistic bacteria (Staphylococcus spp., Streptobacillus spp.)

PREVENTION Gestion des groupes, enrichissement, hygiène de la cage, taille des ongles



WARNING SIGNS

- Porphyrin (red discharge at eyes/nose)
- Respiratory noises
- Masses (mammary tumours)

If any of these symptoms appear, prompt veterinary care is essential.
Contact an exotic-pet vet as soon as possible.

Ectoparasites (mites, lice)

SYMPTOMS Pruritus, scaling, crusts, alopecia; sometimes asymptomatic

CAUSE Radfordia ensifera, Myocoptes musculus, Polyplax serrata; spread via contact

PREVENTION Quarantaine (2-3 semaines), traitement de groupe si infestation; en Suisse, produits spot-on à base de selamectine/ivermectine disponibles via vétérinaire

Endoparasites (pinworms/protozoa)

SYMPTOMS Intermittent diarrhea, anal pruritus, mild weight loss; often subclinical

CAUSE Syphacia spp., Aspiculuris tetraptera; Giardia spp. possible

PREVENTION Hygiène stricte, changement de litière fréquent, quarantaine; vermifugation ciblée selon coproscopie

Malocclusion/overgrown incisors

SYMPTOMS Hyporexia, weight loss, drooling, difficulty grasping food

CAUSE Malalignment, trauma, inadequate wear

PREVENTION Sélection, enrichissement masticatoire approprié; contrôles dentaires réguliers

Pituitary tumors (lactotroph adenoma)

SYMPTOMS Ataxia, hindlimb weakness, lethargy, weight gain, mammary changes in older females

CAUSE Prolactin-secreting pituitary adenoma

PREVENTION Sélection génétique; contrôle de l'alimentation et du poids; dépistage précoce des signes neurologiques

Pododermatitis (bumblefoot)

SYMPTOMS Plantar lesions, ulcers, pain, lameness

CAUSE Obesity, abrasive/wire flooring, moisture, *Staphylococcus* spp.

PREVENTION Substrats souples, surfaces non grillagées, hygiène/séchage, contrôle du poids

Chronic kidney disease

SYMPTOMS PU/PD, weight loss, poor coat, reduced appetite

CAUSE Age-related degeneration, nephrosclerosis: genetic/dietary factors

PREVENTION Hydratation adéquate, alimentation équilibrée, contrôle du poids, dépistage sénior

Zymbal's gland tumors

SYMPTOMS Mass near ear canal, chronic otitis, strong odor

CAUSE Aggressive, fast-growing sebaceous tumor

PREVENTION Détection précoce, hygiène auriculaire, prise en charge rapide

Corynebacterium kutscheri infection

SYMPTOMS Weight loss, internal abscesses, respiratory distress; sometimes sudden death

CAUSE *Corynebacterium kutscheri*; opportunistic disease with stress/overcrowding

PREVENTION Biosécurité, quarantaine, éviter la surpopulation; hygiène stricte

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