

Common Name: Dumbo rat	Scientific Name: <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>
Class: Mammalia Order: Rodentia Family: Muridae	Feeding Type: Herbivore Statistics: Length: 4 – 9 inches Weight: 250-400 grams

DESCRIPTION: The dumbo rat is a normal rat, except for its ears. This rat has a mutation that enlarges and widens the ears as well as placing the ears lower on the head. It also has a broader, flatter head compared to usual domestic rats, and comes in a variety of colors depending on the breed. A scaly tail helps it climb, because the scales ruffle back and give the rat a good grip. Rats have continually growing teeth, usually of a yellowish color.

RANGE: The dumbo rat is a domestic rat that was first bred in the northwest U.S, mainly in Oregon, Washington State, and Idaho. Rats in general are found all over the world, except for mountaintops and Polar Regions.

HABITAT: Because it is completely domestic, it will live in a variety of man-made structures. Dumbo rats could survive in the wild by using the same behaviors as non-domestic rats.

ADAPTATIONS: Rats are agile climbers, looking like small tightrope walkers. Rats can also jump up to two feet. They are excellent swimmers and can stay submerged for up to three minutes. Rats are very smart creatures. Some scientists believe rats are smarter than horses, cows, and many other animals. They can learn from their own experiences as well as from those of others. For example, if a rat sees another rat in a trap, it will often avoid traps.

REPRODUCTION/GROWTH: Rats are highly prolific, and can produce up to 100 offspring in one year. Young are born blind, naked and helpless.

LONGEVITY: Captivity – three to four years

PREY/PREDATOR: Prey to birds, mammals and reptiles
Predator to none

DIET: WILD: Any vegetation available
SZ: Herbivore diet, seeds, fruit and oats

STATUS: Rats are far from endangered, and in the wild are some of the worst animal pests. Besides spreading diseases, they are responsible for damage totaling hundreds of millions of dollars each year in the USA alone. Rats destroy eggs, stored grains, fruits and vegetables. They also gnaw on furniture, lead pipes, and insulation on wires.

Humans have tried to exterminate rats by fire, flood, trapping and shooting. Today rats are also destroyed with anti-fertility drugs and anticoagulants, which allow them to bleed to death.

SPECIAL NOTES: The dumbo rat is an extremely calm, smart, and friendly animal, and is completely domestic. For these reasons, it is becoming extremely popular as a pet. It suffers no disadvantages because of its abnormally large ears, which seems to be one of the reasons people think it's so cute. The dumbo mutation is a recessive trait that alters the head and ear shape. The dumbo rat became standardized in 1997. Many clubs set standards, judge rats, and award prizes. Many breeders supply pedigrees, which help track the color genetics of rats used in breeding programs. There are no 'purebred breeds' of rats as found in dogs or cats, as developing pure strains is not usually a goal for rat breeders, who quite often are more interested in developing new colors, fur types, etc. Different types are referred to as varieties, such as tailless, hairless, rex and standard, rather than breeds.

Breeders are trying to breed rats with more longevity, but it is difficult since it takes many years of careful selection. Unlike feeder-bred stock, the fancy rat is often bred for good temperament. In most cases, fancy rat breeders are more interested in developing better rats than in making money, so the cost of a fancy rat from a breeder is seldom much higher than the price of a rat from a pet shop. The quality of the animal as a pet can be determined easier when one can see what the parents are like. Pet shop rats can be good pets, but there is often no way to determine their genetics or stability of their temperament.

Ancient Rome considered rats a good luck symbol. The Japanese had a traditional belief that the rat was a messenger of the gods, and it is the first animal of the Japanese zodiac, which runs in 12-year cycles. In China, rats are a symbol of prosperity. However, during the Middle Ages in Europe, rats were believed to be creatures of evil.



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