



# Adopters Pack



Congratulations on welcoming an Imagine/All Rat Rat into your home!

We will always be here for any questions you may have, and we hope that this document will help answer all the questions you might have regarding the care of your new fur babies as you welcome them into your home.

This document will contain any and all advice we have from the day you take your rats home, all the way to caring for them throughout their lives.

We will share all our tips and tricks we have learned while owning pet rats.

Please note that the advice we share is from our perspective and you are always free to adapt and change things up to suit you and your ratties.

We hope you enjoy owning these rats just as much as we do. They truly are incredible pets and have so much love to give. They develop their own personalities and have this amazing way of burrowing their way into your hearts.

*All the Bruxes and Boggles*

*Shaz - Imagine Rattery*

*Kelly - All Rat Rattery*



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## Step 1: Getting ready for your new rats

You will be able to choose your rittens when they are 6/8 weeks old. Once you have chosen your rats you will have 2 - 4 weeks to wait before they come home. While this may seem like a long time, we can assure you that time will fly by.

During this time, you'll have the chance to get the final touches ready for your new rittens. Here are a few things we can recommend.

### CAGE:

- ★ You should already have an appropriate cage set up for your rittens, and for those adopters that already have a cage, you should have an appropriate quarantine cage ready.
- ★ We have spoken before about how we are a fleece free rattery. We have nothing against adopters who use fleece or hammocks. But if you do, the fleece has to be cleaned, using chemicals that are safe for your rats, every 2 to 3 days. Fleece does not neutralise ammonia and if left for too long, can have harmful effects on your rats. We recommend the use of kiln dried pine shavings as they neutralise ammonia well and are perfectly safe for your rats. More info on bedding choices can be found here:

<https://imagnerattery.wixsite.com/website/everything-you-need-to-know>

- ★ If you are able to, add a deep base and deep trays to your rats cage. This allows you to add deep layers of substrate and allows you to scatter feed in these bases. The deep bedding will provide enrichment for your rats to burrow in.
- ★ You can also consider putting a dig box into your cage. A dig box can be filled with anything such as: KDP, hay, or even coco peat. A dig box should be deep, with a thick layer of substrate in the bottom. You can scatter some treats or dry mix in the dig box to provide some enrichment for your rats. NB: If you use cocopeat, remember to keep it damp and not to let it dry out too much. It can become very dusty and this can be harmful to your rats.





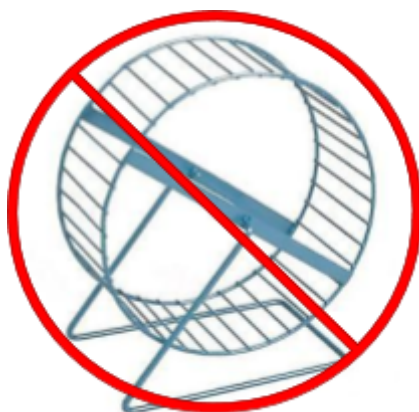
- ★ Cages can be cleaned safely with F10, this can be purchased at most pet shops. Alternatively, you can also use a solution of vinegar and water to wipe down surfaces, but F10 will definitely be the best thing to use during deep cleanings. Bleach and other strong scented cleaning materials should be avoided as this may irritate your rats' respiratory systems.
- ★ You can spot clean during the week. This involves removing droppings, soiled bedding, and wiping down surfaces. Be careful not to clean too often as this will just encourage your rats to mark even more.
- ★ 1x per week, your cage should be cleaned out, all bedding removed, bottles washed out, and trays wiped clean.
- ★ 1x per month your cage must be deep cleaned. This means taking all the toys and baskets out of the cage so that you can scrub the entire cage clean.
- ★ Litter trays can be filled with wooden cat litter and can also be cleaned out 1x per week when you clean your cage. If you have a pee stone in your cage you don't have to scrub this clean every week, only wipe it if it has poo or food on it. You want the rock to still smell like the rats so that they are encouraged to go back to the litter box to do their business.

#### ENRICHMENT:

- ★ Rats are very easy to please. They can find fun in just about anything. The important thing to remember is to have lots of levels, baskets, sticks, and hanging toys for them to play with.
- ★ Sputniks are an absolute necessity in our cages. The rats love to pile into them, as if it's a secret game to see how many of them can stuff themselves into a single sputnik.
- ★ Baskets can be found at the crazy store, westpack, china mall, etc. Make sure you choose baskets that don't have large holes in them so that your rats don't get their feet stuck in them.
- ★ You can also purchase brown paper bags from any packaging store and fill it with dry mix, hay, shredded newspaper, etc. Your rats will absolutely love this and it provides a great source of added fun and enrichment.



- ★ Please be prepared that whatever you put into your cage, the rats will destroy. Rats chew, it's what they do. I've often seen people getting upset that their rats chew the toys and ledges they put into the cage, but that's what the toys are for. They are meant to be there for the rats to enjoy. So make sure that everything you put into the cage is safe for your rats, and don't form any personal attachments to these items.
- ★ Rat wheels can also be used in your cage, however, there are some requirements for these as not all wheels are created equal. I make use of large, solid metal wheels. These wheels are +/- 30cm in diameter. You will need to find a wheel no smaller than this. Try to avoid wheels with bars and mesh as your rats feet and toes might get stuck in them, if you can find a wheel that has a solid running base. Lastly, some wheels have a metal bar that runs across the sides of them, try avoid these as rats can get stuck and injured in them.





## FOOD:

- ★ Our rats receive a combination of the URC dry mix & pellets in their diet. The URC mix has been researched and constantly tested in our own colony to ensure optimal health in our rats. Ratios have been carefully researched and we are able to provide you with all the reasons WHY a certain ingredient made the cut!
- ★ If you would like to learn more about the URCSA diet, please don't hesitate to contact us.

<https://imagerattery.wixsite.com/website/behind-the-scenes>

- ★ Whether you feed fresh or a dry mix, it's important that your rats receive the correct ratios and nutrition they need. Rats "need" the following in their diet: \*Approximate values for the last 4 ratios. This is because carbs and seeds are the "most" important.
  - **75 - 80% Carbohydrates** (5% allowance for the carbs in fruit and veg)
    - 50% Whole grains
    - 20% Processed grains
    - 5% Legumes
  - **10% Seeds**
  - **\*2 - 3% Fruit & Veg** (More fruit than veg due to sugar content)
  - **\*1 - 2% Added proteins** (They get a lot of proteins from the carbs ratios)
  - **\*1 - 2% Herbs**
  - **\*2 - 3% Pellets** (For added minerals)
- ★ Rats are omnivore granivores. This means that they get most of their nutrition from grains and seeds. Your pet rat will eat up to 10% of their body weight OR 5g/100g body weight each day. Younger rats will eat more as they need the energy to grow.
- ★ Always make sure that your rat has access to clean, fresh water. Your rat will drink approx 10ml/100g body weight per day.
- ★ You will be required to purchase a bag of our dry mix for your new babies. This is so that your babies can be transitioned onto the food you intend to give them. If you choose to continue to feed them the URC Dry Mix please let us know so that we can add you to the order group. (<https://chat.whatsapp.com/EFscrYExRFACrKBXBerYue>)



- ★ If you do not wish to use the URC mix that's totally fine too! We will be more than happy to guide you and give advice on what you can feed your rats so that they get everything they need.



## Step 2: Welcoming new rats into your home

### RECEIVING YOUR RATS:

- ★ When your rittens are ready to be collected, we will contact you with available dates and times. Please note that these times are considered to be "appointments" and are to be treated as such. If you are unable to make an appointment please be respectful and notify us as soon as possible. Any rats that are not collected within a suitable time frame and without alternative collection plans in place, will be re-advertised and your payment for the rats will be forfeited.
- ★ Please note that you may be subject to a holding fee if you are unable to collect your rats and require us to hold your rats for an extended period of time.

### ON THE DAY:

- ★ The day your rittens are ready to be collected can be very exciting and also very daunting. But please be rest assured that we will be here for you every step of the way. On the day of collection please ensure that you confirm your appointment time with us and please bring an appropriate carrier. (Do not bring a dog or cat carrier as those are for dogs and cats. Rats are too small and may escape through the holes in those carriers. We won't send our rats home in them! You will be sent away and asked to return with an appropriate carrier.) Here is an example of an appropriate carrier:  
<https://www.facebook.com/182551212435152/posts/272658056757800/>
- ★ All our rittens need to go home on the food they are on now. Rittens can't just be taken home and switched to a new diet immediately. So even if you choose to change diets you will need to wean them off the old one slowly over several weeks. You will need to order food beforehand so that it will be available on the day of collection. Your babies will not be sent home without the proper food.
- ★ After your rittens arrive in their new home, allow them 2 to 3 days to adjust. The drive home in the car and your home will be new to them and they need time to adapt to their new environment, find food & water, get used to the new smells, etc. You are 100% able to play with your rittens during this time, you do not have to leave them alone in their cage.



### **WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOUR RITTENS ARE HOME:**

- ★ New rats may sneeze during the first 10 to 14 days in a new environment, this is perfectly normal as they adjust to their new home. Please notify us immediately if you notice any sneezing.
- ★ Please let us know how the babies are doing by the end of the first week. We will also add you to our Rattery Facebook/Whatsapp groups where you will be able to share updates and ask questions. Please make sure that you are added to this group by the time your rats have been taken home.

[\(https://www.facebook.com/groups/2157165667891399/\)](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2157165667891399/)

- ★ We may request any health or mortality updates, should the need arise. we like to keep track of these details in our lines so that we can continue to breed healthy, well-tempered rats in the future.
- ★ We have an "open door" policy for all our adopters who have purchased rats directly from us. Should you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us. All our adopters will also have access to the exclusive Facebook/Whatsapp Groups for any questions, comments, or concerns. Adopters will also be given our personal phone numbers, should they need to contact us urgently.

### **DO NOT LET YOUR OTHER PETS INTERACT WITH YOUR RATS:**

- ★ While we understand that there are countless videos all over social media of rats interacting with dogs, cats, etc. We do not condone this at all. This puts your rats at risk of being injured and killed and it is not worth the risk.
- ★ Rats should not be allowed to interact with rodents, rabbits, birds etc. Rats have been known to injure and kill these animals. We do not condone interspecies interaction at all.



### Step 3: Care and advice:

#### WHAT TO EXPECT FROM US?:

- ★ We will ALWAYS take any rat back, no matter what, no questions asked.
- ★ Whilst we do our best to breed only the best, things do happen. We will replace any rat who has temperament faults free of charge, assuming the issues have not been caused by environmental faults.
- ★ We will always be available for any questions and advice.
- ★ We will inform all adopters of anything we believe may affect them in a line from which they have rats.

#### WHAT DO WE EXPECT FROM YOU?:

- ★ Should you wish to breed, inform us so that we can provide you with better breeding stock and the relevant pedigrees.
- ★ The rats must be housed indoors in an appropriate cage
- ★ The rats must receive care or euthanasia when ill. They will not be allowed to suffer
- ★ The rats must live in accordance with the 5 freedoms
- ★ The rats MUST be returned to the breeder should the owner no longer be able to care for them/no longer want them. They MAY NOT be given to another individual or organisation without the express, written permission of myself.

#### OUR STANCE ON HUMANE EUTHANASIA:

- ★ We value each and every rat that we breed and own. Regardless of where they come from and what they are used for, we love all our rats equally and our rats are all upheld to a certain standard.
- ★ A healthy and happy rat should be comfortable, happy with handling and at ease amongst other rats.
- ★ We keep the majority of our adult rats after breeding if they are well tempered. Those that we do not keep are either humanely euthanized for a valid reason (see below) or are pet homed to trusted friends.



### *What do we consider a “valid reason” to euthanize a rat?*

- ★ The rat is ill and not easily treated. We do not believe in major surgery for our rats. This is because surgery is extremely risky for such small animals, and the potential for something to go wrong is far higher than with cats and dogs. Rats also live a very short amount of time, and expecting them to spend even a few months recovering from something that may not be permanently solved (such as recurring tumours) is in our opinion, unfair on the rat. Quality of life is always our primary justification for euthanasia.
- ★ The rat is unable to be happily integrated with a colony. This means the rat is either scared or aggressive with other rats. This is non negotiable as this affects the health, safety and happiness of other rats living in the colony.
- ★ The rat is aggressive or skittish with humans. We breed rats as pets. This means they should see us as family and not a threat. Rats who are not friendly and loving towards humans are not appropriate for any home.
- ★ If the rat is from a line not ready to be released to the public yet, and it is unable to be utilised in our breeding program.

*The following was adapted from our sister rattery: Calico Rattery & Exotic's policies:*

<https://calicoexotics.com/our-policies/>

At this point you should have already read through the documents on our website as well as the links included in the previous sections. These will all provide the information you will need when caring for your pet rats.

All adopters will be given an adoption pack with all the information they may need. However, if our adopters feel that they still need more guidance they are always welcome to contact us.

### **SAFE FOODS:**

Your pet rats can eat pretty much anything you eat. Please see our website for a full list of safe foods.

No matter if you decide to feed fresh or a dry mix, it's important that you keep the following ratios in mind:

- **75 - 80% Carbohydrates** (5% allowance for the carbs in fruit and veg)
  - 50% Whole grains
  - 20% Processed grains
  - 5% Legumes



- **10% Seeds**
- **\*2 - 3% Fruit & Veg** (More fruit than veg due to sugar content)
- **\*1 - 2% Added proteins** (They get a lot of proteins from the carbs ratios)
- **\*1 - 2% Herbs**
- **\*2 - 3% Pellets** (For added minerals)

#### **DO NOT FEED:**

- Wild insects
- Stones/Pits/Seeds
- Avocado Skin
- Liquorice
- Sweets/Mints
- Unripe fruits/veg
- Carbonated drinks
- Excess sugar
- Blue/Moldy Cheese
- Fast food
- Excessively oily food
- Cheese

#### **TAKE CARE WHEN FEEDING:**

##### ★ Citrus:

- In a study where rats were fed extremely high concentrations of d-limonene concentrate for an extended period of time, it was found that it increased the likelihood of cancer in male rats. This does not mean it is unsafe for male rats to consume, it simply means that it must be fed in moderation, as with most things

##### ★ High water content vegetables such as cucumber or iceberg lettuce:

- These foods are not unsafe to feed, however provide very little nutrition and are mostly water. This can come in handy for long trips, however please note that overfeeding of these items may cause runny stools



★ Almonds:

- Bitter almonds are high in emulsion which produces cyanide under certain circumstances. Sweet almonds do not have this same enzyme and therefore do not produce cyanide

★ Spinach:

- This vegetable is high in oxalate and should therefore be fed in moderation

★ Rhubarb:

- Only to be fed when cooked and be very limited

★ Onion family (onions, leeks, spring onions):

- More palatable when cooked however can be fed raw, to be fed in moderation

★ Aubergine/Eggplant:

- Can be fed raw or cooked but is more palatable when cooked. Should be fed in moderation as it has a small nicotine concentration

★ Beans:

- Can be fed when cooked. Raw beans contain antinutrients

★ Foods high in sugar:

- These should be limited

★ Endive:

- Increases calcium absorption and bone density so useful for young rats but should be fed in moderation as too much can cause issues

★ Loganberry:

- Bitter when raw, should be fed cooked

★ Sweet Chestnuts:

- May cause stomach upset if fed raw



★ Leaves and Flowers of Tomato

- Avoid feeding

★ Sticky foods such as peanut butter:

- This may pose a choking hazard for some rats and should be monitored when fed or watered down

★ Lactose:

- Some rats may be lactose intolerant. Introduce dairy slowly and in small amounts, monitoring stools for any abnormalities

★ High fat foods:

- Rats cannot metabolise fats in the same way that we do and therefore all unhealthy fats should be avoided

**HEALTH CHECK:**

Due to the fact that rats are prey creatures, they are very good at hiding illnesses/pain/health issues.

Once symptoms have been noticed, it may already be too late. For this reason, you should perform basic health checks on a regular basis, and take note of overall behaviour on a day to day basis. If you notice something alarming, it should be seen to ASAP by a medical professional

★ Behaviour & Personality”

- If your rat suddenly starts eating less, becomes nippy or irritable or becomes lethargic, these may be signs of an issue.

★ Breathing:

- A rat's breathing is usually very silent. Abnormal breathing such as heavy breaths, wheezing, gasping or clicking are signs of distress. This could indicate a respiratory infection, allergies or a heart condition.

★ Body :

- The body should be devoid of any lumps or bumps. Small scratches usually heal fine on their own, however large cuts may require disinfection and close



monitoring. The rat should be shaped like a bread loaf, with no excess fat, nor protruding bones.

★ Coat :

- Fur should be soft, smooth and have a sheen to it. Rusting (brown patches) may be a sign of a copper deficiency either due to diet or the rats personal inability to properly absorb copper. Loss of fur may indicate barbering, mites, or a fungal infection such as ringworm.

★ Ears :

- When a rat is in distress they will often be pulled back. Therefore the ears should stand upright at all times. Ears should be devoid of scabs, bumps, discharge or smells.

★ Eyes :

- The eyes should be bright and devoid of swelling, redness or discharge. A small amount of porphyrin is normal during change of seasons and after sleeping. Swelling behind or around the eye can be indicative of an abscess, tumour or other infection. In hairless, swelling and thickening of the eyelid is common and it is known as entropion.

★ Excrement :

- Blood in feces or urine should be seen to immediately. Soft poop may be a sign of internal parasites, too much wet food or a food item disagreeing with the system.

★ Genitals:

- Bleeding, foul odours or discharge is a cause for concern in male and female rats. Females do not have a period like dogs or humans and therefore should not bleed unless giving birth or there is an issue. Some bucks may get their penis stuck, in which case a sugar and water paste can be used to massage it back in. Genital prolapses and anal prolapses should be watched out for.

★ Nose:

- The nose should be free of discharge or porphyrin. Excessive sneezing should be seen to, as it may indicate an allergy or other issue. Small amounts of sneezing and porphyrin is acceptable during weather changes and bedding changes.



★ Odour :

- In general, rats and their cage should smell neutral and “rat-like”. A rotting or sweet smell can indicate an infection or other medical issue.

★ Posture & Movement:

- Rats should be active. Lethargy, loss of balance, inability to hold food, walking in circles and inability to use limbs are signs of many issues and should be seen to ASAP.

★ Skin:

- The skin should be free of scabs and should never be blue or purple. The latter is a sign of poor circulation and should be seen to. The skin should bounce back when pinched, if it stays up it is a sign of dehydration.

★ Tail:

- The tail should be round from base to tip, with no bones visible. The tail should be devoid of scabs or other issues.

★ Teeth:

- The front teeth should be yellow. White front teeth can be an indication of a lack of minerals in the diet. A rat grinds its teeth to keep them short. If there is excess growth or the teeth are misaligned, the teeth may need to be trimmed on a regular basis, or other measures taken.

★ Weight:

- A rat's weight should remain stable. One should monitor the weight and body condition in tandem to ensure the rat is healthy, as weight alone does not indicate much.



## **FIRST AID KIT:**

Recommended items to keep in a first aid kit are as follows:

**\*Please note that this does not replace vet care\***

**\*\* Always check medicine and dosages with your vet before giving anything to your rats! This is only to be used as a guideline and does not replace advice from a vet.**

- ★ **1ml syringe** - medicine measurement
- ★ **5ml syringe** - syringe feeding purity/isomil/tea for weak rats
- ★ **Allergex**- alleviates allergy symptoms
  - Dosage: 0.03ml per 100g 2x a day (3 days max)
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Asthma pump** - unable to breathe
  - Dosage: 1-2 pumps
  - Administration: pumped close to rats face, for inhalation
- ★ **Baby food (purity)** - encourage eating/extra nutrients
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Baytril** - URI (Antibiotic)
  - Dosage: 0.03ml per 100g
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Bisolvon** - Open airways
  - Dosage: 0.03ml per 100g
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Camomile tea** - healing properties/rehydration
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Cortisone/Aspelone/prednisolone** - multi use (URI, tumours, etc)
  - Dosage: use as directed by your vet
  - Administration: Oral



- ★ **Dermavet** - injuries
  - Administration: Topical
- ★ **Doxysyrup** - URI (Antibiotic)
  - Dosage: 0.1ml per 100g
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Ensure** - Sick / Underweight rats
  - Dosage: Mix 50/50 with water
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **F10 wound spray/debrizyme** - injuries
  - Administration: Topical
- ★ **Heat pad/water bottle** - rat in shock/weak
- ★ **Isomil** - extra nutrients/hand rearing pups
  - Dosage: Mix 50/50 with water
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Ivermectin** - mites, worms and lice
  - Dosage: 0.01-0.02ml per \*500g\*
  - Administration: Topical
- ★ **Nurofen** - pain management
  - Dosage: 0.05-0.2ml per 100g (depending on pain severity)
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Protexin** - gut health/diarrhea
  - Dosage: Lightly sprinkled over food
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Rehydrat** - dehydrated/weak rat
  - Administration: Oral
- ★ **Revolution**: Fleas, mites and worms



- Dosage: 0.02ml per 100g
- Administration: Topical

★ **Viral Guard Junior:** Immune booster for sick rats/during season changes

- Dosage: 0.1ml daily for 7 days max. Alternatively, 0.1ml 2x per week for use over long periods
- Administration: Oral



## Step 4: Important things to remember

### RETURNS:

If you no longer want or are no longer able to care for your rat/s, we ask that you return them to us.

We will always take back any rat/s no matter the reason.

Refunds for the rat/s will not be given and the rat/s must be returned at the buyer's expense.

**Rats need to be returned in an appropriate cage.**

Please note that once you return your rat/s you relinquish all rights to the rat/s. We will then decide if the rats are to be rehomed/retired/etc. We want our rat/s to go to the best quality of life possible, and we will do anything in our power to facilitate this.

### REFUNDS:

We will never sell a rat that we don't believe will make an ideal pet with no hormonal/aggression issues. However, if for any reasons you experience these issues with your rats we will do everything in our power to assist you or we will take the rat/s back. If you choose, we will offer a replacement from a future litter where possible.

**Deposits are non refundable.**

### WHERE ARE WE LOCATED?:

#### Imagine Rattery:

Midrand, Johannesburg

MAP: <https://goo.gl/maps/ufQ6VkgHqW8UTrae8>

#### All Rat Rattery:

Kempton Park, Johannesburg

MAP: <https://goo.gl/maps/Bzeg6hxqU7XDHSU86>

Because we both work closely together, collection points for rittens can be done at either address. You will just have to make an appointment.