



## **CODES OF PRACTICE**

**October 2019**

### **SECTION ONE: KEEPING**

Mice and Rats are to be kept in a safe, secure enclosure that meets the absolute minimum requirements for size, bedding, and enrichment. Enclosures must meet all physiological and psychological needs.

#### **Minimum enclosure requirements are as follows;**

- a. Enclosure is to meet or exceed the space required for normal behaviours such as movement and postural changes. Adequate room for exercise is also part of the minimum requirements.
- b. Enclosure is to be compatible for all known psychological and behavioural needs of the mouse/mice or rat/rats.
- c. Enclosure is to be durable. Kept in good repair, clean and free from damage that would allow escape or harm to come to the inhabitant.
- d. Enclosure is to be adequately ventilated with easy access to food, water and all enrichment items by the mouse/mice or rat/rats.
- e. Where the use of wire/hardware cloth is used to provide ventilation as part of the enclosure, care must be taken to ensure it is safe for the mouse/mice or rat/rats so as to prevent injury and/or escape.
- f. Mice and Rats are to be housed in own species social groups, with exception where the welfare of the animal would be compromised.
- g. Enclosure must contain appropriate bedding at all times. Any bedding is to dust free, dry, absorbent, non-toxic and species specific safe.
- h. Where the keeping of both mice and rats is being practised, neither is to be cohabited with the other. Rats are to be kept in rat appropriate enclosures free from mice and vice versa.

**MINIMUM MOUSE/MICE ENCLOSURE SPACE REQUIREMENTS TABLE\*\***

| NUMBER OF ANIMALS    | WEIGHT OF ANIMAL | MINIMUM FLOOR SPACE*  |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
|                      | Grams            | (Width x Depth in cm) |
| SINGLE               | ANY              | 20 x 20               |
| GROUP<br>4 x ANIMALS | <30gm            | 20 x 25               |
|                      | 31-40gm          | 25 x 30               |
|                      | 40>              | 25 x 40               |
| BREEDING             | PAIR             | 25 x 30               |
|                      | 1 x DOE + LITTER | 25 x 30               |
|                      | EXTRA FEMALES    | ADD 5 cm <sup>2</sup> |

**MINIMUM RAT/RATS ENCLOSURE SPACE REQUIREMENTS TABLE\*\***

| NUMBER OF ANIMALS    | WEIGHT OF ANIMAL | MINIMUM FLOOR SPACE*   |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|
|                      |                  | (Width x Depth in cm)  |
| SINGLE***            | <250gm           | 27 x 40                |
|                      | 250-550gm        | 27 x 40                |
|                      | 550>gm           | 27 x 40                |
| GROUP<br>3 x ANIMALS | <150gm           | 35 x 50                |
|                      | 150-350gm        | 35 x 50                |
|                      | 351-550gm        | 35 x 50                |
|                      | 550>gm           | 45 x 60                |
| BREEDING             | PAIR             | 35 x 50                |
|                      | FEMALE + LITTER  | 35 x 50                |
|                      | EXTRA ANIMAL     | ADD 15 cm <sup>2</sup> |

\* Minimum height is to be adequate enough for the animal to stand on hind legs

\*\*\* Rats kept on their own is not advised as they are social animals, however should a rat require being kept alone, these are the minimum space standards.

## **SECTION TWO: CARE**

1. All rats/mice in the care of a person are to be provided adequate and balanced nutrition.

Minimum nutrition needs are as follows;

- a. Rats/Mice are to be provided a completely balanced dry diet ad lib. Appropriate daily diets are Laucke Rat and Mouse cubes, Vetafarm Rodent Origins Rat and Mouse feed, Cummins Rat and Mouse Pellets.
- b. All fruits/vegetables/food extras are to be considered treats and fed in treat size proportions so as to not encourage food favouring, obesity or unbalanced nutrition.
- c. Any food subject to spoiling is to be removed if not eaten to prevent the ingestion of rotten food and/or to encourage an unsanitary enclosure.
- d. When Rats/Mice are kept in groups, care is to be taken to ensure all animals are gaining access to food and any changes to any animals eating patterns is to be observed and veterinary assistance sought where required.

2. Rats/Mice are to have access to water at all times.

Minimum water requirements are as follows;

- a. Water is to be accessible at all times from a working water bottle.
- b. Where a dish is provided for water, it is to be kept free from bedding, faeces and contamination with anything that could dirty the water.
- c. Water supply is to be checked daily to ensure animals are always able to access clean fresh water.

3. Cleaning of soiled substrate and enclosure is to be done regularly.

Minimum cleaning requirements as follows;

- a. Removal of soiled bedding should be done as necessary to prevent ammonia build up.
- b. Over-cleaning is to be avoided as this can cause animals to urinate spots more frequently causing a faster ammonia build up.
- c. The room in which animals are kept in is to be clean, tidy and free of vermin.
- d. The use of strong odour chemicals is to be discouraged in and around all animals and their enclosures.

## SECTION THREE: BREEDING

It is strongly recommended that a female **Domestic Rat (Doe)**;

- a. Not be bred before 5 months of age,
- b. Not be bred more than twice in her lifetime,
- c. Is given at least 3 months between litters to regain weight and condition,
- d. Not be bred after 12 months of age if she has never produced a litter or after 15 months of age if she has had a prior litter.

It is strongly recommended that a female **Domestic Mouse (Doe)**;

- a. Not be bred before 4 months of age,
- b. Not be bred more than twice in her lifetime,
- c. Is given at least 2 months between litters to regain weight and condition,
- d. Not be bred after 10 months of age if she has never produced a litter or after 12 months of age if she has had a prior litter.

It is recommended that a **male Domestic Rat or Mouse** not be overbred, so that he is able to maintain a healthy weight and condition. It is recommended that a male be at least 4 months of age before being bred to ensure that he is healthy and robust.

Rats or Mice used for breeding are to be of appropriate health, temperament, size and age before any breeding is to be considered.

Mice babies are not to be sold until a minimum of 6 weeks of age and must be in good health.

Rat babies are not to be sold until 8 weeks of age and must be in good health.

## SECTION FOUR: SALES AND PURCHASES

NSWFERS Inc. member hobbyist breeders who keep and sell animals from their residence agree to abide by the Codes of Practice set out by the NSWFRS Inc.

The sale of rats is to be in accordance with these guidelines as follows;

- a. Rats must not be sold before the age of 8 weeks. Documentation of births to ensure this is followed is **compulsory**. Evidence of age may be requested at any time by any relevant authority.
- b. Female rats sold must be 230g (anything more than 20g less is void from sale until minimum weight is achieved).
- c. Male rats sold must be 280g (anything more than 20g less is void from sale until minimum weight is achieved).
- d. All rats sold must meet appropriate health standards. They must be free from any illness, parasites and wounds/injury.

The sale of mice is to be in accordance with these guidelines as follows;

- a. Mice must not be sold before the age of 6 weeks. Documentation of births to ensure this is followed is compulsory. Evidence of age may be requested at any time by any relevant authority.
- b. Female mice sold must be 26g (anything more than 3g less is void from sale until minimum weight is achieved)
- c. Male mice sold must be 30g (anything more than 3g less is void from sale until minimum weight is achieved)
- d. All mice sold must meet appropriate health standards. They must be free from any illness, parasites and wounds/injury.

Pregnant animals must not be made available for sale and must be immediately removed and housed appropriately. Removal of all female animals on display for sale is then advised until the male is found and removed and/or no other females present as pregnant.

## **SECTION FIVE: SALES AND PURCHASES FROM PET SHOPS**

This is a guideline of what NSWFRS Inc. considers acceptable when purchasing rats and mice from a commercial outlet such as a pet shop.

- a. Pet shops must adhere to all regulations in the POCTA Welfare Code of Practice for pet shops outlined for their state.
- b. The sale of rats is to be in accordance with guidelines within section (4).
- c. The sale of mice is to be in accordance with guidelines within section (4).
- d. All rats and mice in a pet store environment must have genders separated appropriately to avoid pregnancy in animals for sale. Checking genders frequently can help prevent accidents.
- e. It is not acceptable for pregnant animals to be on display or to be sold from a pet shop. Pregnant animals and all other females housed within the same display must be immediately removed from and housed appropriately until the male is found and removed and/or no other females present as pregnant.