

## Pet Rats And Dogs And Cats

### Is it safe to have pet rats in a home with dogs and cats?

*By Carol Lawton*

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**Q:** I finally talked my spouse into getting a pet rat. Is it better to get two? I also have two cats and a dog. I don't plan on letting them roam together, but I also don't want to terrify the rats. They will have alone time with me, but will the scent of the other animals in the room scare them? I had rats growing up and am super excited!

**A:** I think you've made a wonderful decision to allow these delightful and social creatures to join your family. And because rats are so social, it is absolutely essential that they have a same-sex cagemate ... or two. Both male and female rats enjoy living with multiple companions.

You are right to be concerned about the other pets, but many people are surprised to learn that far more accidental injuries are inflicted by dogs than cats. Baby rats must always be watched very carefully when they are near any other animals, but adult rats can be very intimidating and many cats will simply walk away when faced with one. But dogs, particularly the terrier breeds, are not as easily intimidated and may view your new pets as hyperactive chew toys.

You can find many videos online showing dogs, cats and rats as one happy family, but these are typically families who have kept multiple pets for a very long time and have worked very hard to establish these relationships. I strongly recommend that you not try this.

To avoid any unnecessary stress to your new pets I suggest contacting a reputable rat breeder in your area who also has cats or dogs — preferably both — this will ensure that your new pet rats are already comfortable around other types of animals, which will help their transition to their new home.

If this isn't possible, then allow slow but progressive exposure over the course of a week. Before long, your new babies will be comfortable with having the other pets in the same room.

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