

## Rat Keeps Chewing On Cage Bars

**Why would a rat chew on the cage bars if she has chew toys?**

*By Carol Lawton*

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**Q:** I have a question about my pet rat, Pam. I have had her for about four months, and she is great. She has a cagemate, Valentine. I let them out to play usually for at least an hour a day, sometimes more when I can. They are on a pellet diet, and they eat those about four times a day. Pam is a very happy rat, and very active and affectionate. However, for some reason, she is constantly chewing her cage bars. Every time I see her she is just gnawing on the bars, and I can't figure out why. They have wooden chips in their cage to chew on but she won't stop. Any ideas?

**A:** Some rats develop a habit of chewing their cage bars even when they are given much better things to chew. But don't be overly concerned, it doesn't usually damage the rat's teeth and only rarely is it a sign of problems with their diet, mouth or teeth.

If you're concerned about this habit causing excessive wear, check your rat's teeth once a month. Do this by holding her firmly and gently pushing both cheeks back to expose her front teeth. They should be an orangey color, fairly even in length but slightly separated at the tip. And don't be surprised if you see one of the teeth move a little bit — that's completely normal.

If you're uncertain about your rat's dental health, a trip to your veterinarian can set your mind at ease.

In this case, it sounds like Pam and Valentine have a very happy and full life, and Pam is just trying to tell you that she would rather be out of her cage having play time.

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