

Read Rat Body Language

Rats communicate through vocalization and body language.

By Audrey Pavia

Rats communicate with each other and their owners through vocalization and body language. Here are some of the sounds and behaviors your rat may exhibit:

Bruxing: When rats are content, they make a grinding sound with their teeth called bruxing. If your rat makes this sound, keep doing whatever it is you are doing, because your small pet clearly likes it.

Screaming: When rats are extremely frightened or feel acute pain, they may scream. Stop whatever is happening that is causing the rat to scream.

Squeaking: Rats often squeak as a complaint when dealing with another rat or human who is doing something the rat doesn't appreciate. Depending on why your rat is squeaking, you may want to ignore this sound. If you are trimming your rat's nails, for example, and it is squeaking in protest, let your small pet make all the noise it wants.

Puffing up: A rat acting aggressive toward another rat may puff up its fur and hunch its back. Remove the rat that is the object of the aggression so a fight doesn't ensue. Don't pick up the aggressive rat as you might get hurt.

Anxiety: A rat that is nervous or anxious about something may pin its ears and back away from whatever is scaring it. Rats sometimes shake their tail when nervous, too. Do what you can to change the situation to help your rat become less worried.

Pushing: Rats tend to push things away with their paws that they don't want. This could be food, an object or a human hand. Take the hint!

Urine marking: Unaltered male rats that want to mark their territory leave drops of urine around their cage or room. Neuter your male rat to get it to cease this behavior.