

Type Question: Head Shape On Rats

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Q On one of our Aussie forums, a discussion popped up regarding short vs. long heads in rats (people talking about conformation in Australia?? blasphemy). Someone asked this question: “Just for interest’s sake, has anyone interested in conformation ever got out some calipers and measured different areas of the skull to determine if the ‘blunter’ look favoured is due to the skull being proportionally wider or if it is more due to the skull length being proportionally shorter? If the latter, could it potentially effect the size of the nasal cavity with an attendant impact on respiration? Obviously rats with blunt faces are not in the same category as brachycephalic dog breeds, but I’m a bit leery of breeding for blunt noses in an animal that is already prone to respiratory conditions.”

Just wondering if that had ever been thought about in your experience or if you had anything to add? Not sure about it myself but thought maybe you would know.

A Not sure if the question is implying “blunt” meaning we want the rats to be like a Pug dog or Persian cat with “smashed in faces” which those animals do have breathing/eye problems. With rats, shorter heads that we breed for are not at all like a “pug” but rather just not having as LONG of a head that a lot of rats have; we also breed for a nice shape. Remember length (short or long) is bred in so one could easily breed rats with very long, narrow heads or go to the other end of the spectrum by breeding rats with very short, wide heads. I’ve seen rats with even shorter, wider heads than what is pictured on our Rat Type Issues www.afirma.org/rattypeissues.htm or Official Rat Standard www.afirma.org/stdsrat.htm pages that to me, are much too short (those rats did not have respiratory issues that I know of due to their very short heads; however, with

Rat Head Measurements					
Rat ID/Info	Sex	Age of Rat	Width	Length	Head Comments
“2130-A” Cinnamon Pearl	Male	10 months	1.17	2.10	Good; very nice male head
”Bii 5-18-13 C Pearl” Pearl	Male	11 months	1.15	2.07	Good; little long
“2131-A” Black hvy. Var.	Male	10 months	1.18	2.2	Good, but longer than CP & Pearl
“2131-B” Black Berkshire	Male	10 months	1.17	2.06	Longer but good shape
“2146-A” Silver Black Dalmatian	Male	3 months	1.16	2.28	Good for Dalmatian, could be better
“2146-B” Silver Black heavy marked Dalmatian	Male	3 months	1.106	2.125	Long narrow head, small eyes
“2142-2” Pearl	Female	6 months	1.06	2.00	Nice head
“2142-1” Mink	Female	6 months	0.944	2.05	Good head but longer than Pearl sister
“Bii Mink ‘V’ 4-23-13” Mink	Female	12 months	1.07	1.98	Good shape but little long
“2152-1” Pearl	Female	2 months	0.91	1.65	Head little long but good shape



A 10-month-old Cinnamon Pearl male with a very nice masculine head (2130-A) showing width and length. Measurements: 1.17W x 2.10L.



11-month-old Pearl male with a good head (Bii 5-18-13 “C” Pearl). Compared to the Cinnamon Pearl, this head is a little longer looking and not as wide but still looks masculine. Measurements: 1.15W x 2.07L.

extremely short, wide heads the moms could have trouble with birthing them).

Many years ago we heard about “pug” rats that had heads “with a pronounced upper lip and his nose high on his snout” but these should **NEVER** be bred for. They do have “spontaneous pug rats” in the labs

www.rrrc.us/Strain/?x=657 that have all kinds of health issues.

I’ve never noticed a connection with respiratory issues related to nice head shape/size. Selecting healthy, strong individuals should always be one of the top priorities when breeding along with a good



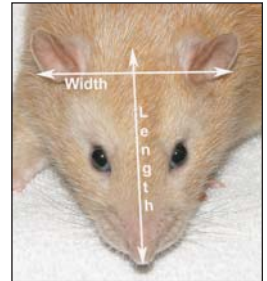
10-month-old Black very heavily marked Variegated male (2131-A). His head is nicer than his brother's but you can see it is longer than the Cinnamon Pearl or the Pearl above. Measurements: 1.18W x 2.2L.



... and the 10-month-old Black Berkshire brother (2131-B). He has a longer looking, narrower head though it has good shape. Measurements: 1.17W x 2.06L.

environment (keeping the cages clean and using a non-toxic bedding to minimize them getting sick and giving them a proper diet). We had a couple breeders in the past find that long heads had more respiratory problems.

I was intrigued by your question so I borrowed some calipers and with the help of my husband, we measured several of my rats' heads (all Standards). Width was at the widest point at the ears, length was from between the ears (base of skull) to the tip of the nose;



Measuring points.



3-month-old Silver Black Dalmatian male (2146-A) with a decent head for Dalmatian though could be better. Size: 1.16W x 2.28L.



... and his brother (2146-B), a heavy-marked Silver Black Dalmatian with a narrower, longer looking head. Measurements: 1.106W x 2.125L.



12-month-old Mink female (Bii Mink "V" 4-23-13) with head good shape but little long looking. Measurements: 1.07W x 1.98L.



6-month-old Pearl female (2142-2) with nice head. Measurements: 1.06W x 2.00L.



... and her sister 2142-1, a Mink with good head but longer than her sister. Measurements: 0.944W x 2.055L.



2-month-old Pearl female (2152-1) with head little long but has nice shape. Measurements: 0.91W x 1.65L.

measurements in inches. So you can see by the measurements that the rats have length as well as width to their heads, none are wider than they are long. Rats all owned and bred by Karen Robbins, photos all ©2014 Karen Robbins unless otherwise noted.



Adult Cinnamon male imported from England in 2004, owned by Mayumi Anderson, bred by Paul Threapleton/Sue Foulds. This male had a very short, wide head. Photo ©2004 Craig Robbins.



A Black-Eyed White male with a very long, narrow head. Photo ©2005 Karen Robbins.



Two one-day-old males with normal head on L and narrow head with small muzzle on R. Rats owned and bred by Karen Robbins. Photo ©2011 Karen Robbins.

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Rats and Mice Around the World

American Rat Club

About The ARC



The American Rat Club (ARC) was founded in 2011 and brings together rat lovers from all over the US, and provides a positive, friendly atmosphere where ideas and experiences can be shared, information about all aspects of rat care can be sought, and

education provided.

We will hold at least one show per year, which will include classes and/or areas of interest to both pet owners and breeders.

Goals

The ARC is an organization dedicated to promoting rats as companion animals, and through the respectful sharing of ideas, information, and experiences, to providing education to members and the public as to the proper care of pet rats. ARC will also encourage breeders to work to continue to improve the species and make rats available to pet owners for adoption.

ARC Shows

The ARC Annual Shows are held in June in Lansing, MI. Entries to our shows are limited to ARC members only. The public is welcome, and encouraged to attend (but please leave your rats at home)! Photos of our shows can be seen on our Shows page.

Membership

Membership is open to anyone who agrees to abide by the club's Code of Ethics. There will be no tolerance of poor sportsmanship at shows, or of verbal or written "attacks" of others, in person, on our Facebook page, or in any forum.

Membership dues for one year are \$15 for Individuals, \$20 for a Family (more than one member in immediate family).

Once a member, you can then communicate with other members on our Facebook Group and the ARC Forum!

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