

# Rattastic Discussions Magazine



10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Special Edition!

Part 1



#36  
31<sup>st</sup> January  
2025

Hi everyone!

It's been a while – way too long – but Rattastic Discussions Magazine is back!

I had a pretty bad year last year with losing rats so never did get round to celebrating Rattastic Discussions turning ten – how did that happen already? To make up for that though, I will be releasing this special edition part one 'nostalgia' magazine right at the end of our 'ten year'. This will be followed with a part two 'nostalgia' edition in a few days. These two issues will then be followed by a new 'revamped' version of Rattastic Discussions Magazine later in February so stay tuned.

- Caitlin

Cover stars: Socks and Sammy (top), Scout, Bailey and Darwin (middle), Hercules, Sebastian and Miles (bottom).

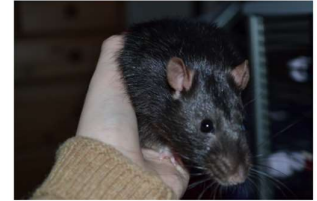
# A Journey Through The History of Rattastic Discussions Magazine

I started Rattastic Discussions Magazine in February 2014. I introduced my first rats, Socks and Sammy, in this issue.

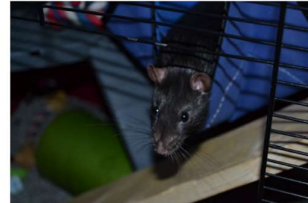
At the time, I had been learning to use a green screen and this issue included a picture of Socks showing off my green screen abilities!



Name: Sammy  
Gender: Male  
Estimated DOB: 17th July 2013  
Favourite Food: Roast beef  
Siblings: Socks



Name: Socks  
Gender: Male  
Estimated DOB: 17th July 2013  
Favourite Drink: Milk  
Siblings: Sammy



In the second issue, I included a poem I had written called 'A Rats' Heart' and one of my favourite pictures of Socks and Sammy together.



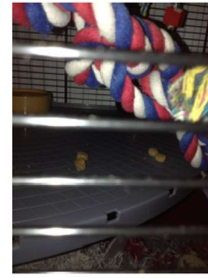
## A RATS' HEART

*Until you yourself have owned,  
A creature quite so loving,  
And loyal as a rat,  
You are yet to know true happiness,*

*Once finding that happiness,  
You have finally ignited the fire,  
That burns so deep inside you,  
You know at last the true meaning of love.*

- Caitlin Walburn

One night Sammy had perked up a lot, and before eating he counted out two rat nuggets for himself, and another two for Socks.



The third issue talked about the seizure Sammy had, as well as a story about Sammy counting out food for Socks.

This issue also detailed how to make your own World Rat Day rat cape!

This really does demonstrate how intelligent and caring rats can be.

Rat Cape

Before Sammy had his seizure I began work on a little rat cape for both Sammy and Socks. Due to Sammy being ill the cape became Socks.

This is a very simple cape to make, and I made it this way so that it doesn't annoy the rat when he wears it.

You Will Need:

- Blue felt
- Green felt
- Orange thread
- Scissors
- Paper
- A needle

Step One

Cut out the basic cape shape out of the blue felt.

Step Two

Draw three continents onto a piece of paper, and cut them out. Then lay them where you want them on your cape shape.



Step Three

Draw around your paper continents, so that you have three continents on green felt.



Step Four

Cut out the continents drawn on the green felt, and place them where you want them on the cape.



Step Five

Using the needle and orange thread sew on the continents.















Step Six

Stitch a border around the outside of the cape.





 Step Seven

 Add a rat. You can lay your cape on top of your rat now,  or as I did tie some string around each end of the cape  and put it around the rat's neck. If you choose to do this  be very careful that your rat doesn't get strangled. It is  important to keep it loose so your rat *can* get out if it  needs to. Also remember that this is just for fun, but your  rat may not like it. If that is the case don't stress your rat  out by trying to make it wear it, just let your rat play  instead.



Socks eating a treat, whilst wearing his new cape. =)





At the end of April 2014, I lost both Socks and Sammy.

I detailed everything in the May issue of the magazine which I'll share below.

In the summer of 2013 I decided that I wanted to own rats. I did a lot of research on them and decided to go to my local pet shop and have a look.

Upon arriving there I was met with a little rat they had there, whilst a member of staff was showing me the rats they had. I really wanted to take that rat home but decided that it would be better to set up a home in my house first.

I purchased the necessary stuff for rats;

**a big cage**  
**a hammock**  
**a food bowl**  
**a water bottle**  
**toys**  
**bag of food**  
**bag of rat litter**  
**treats**

A few weeks later, in July, I returned to the pet shop and was introduced to a group of little eight week old rats. After playing with them for a while I fell in love with two of them. A brown rat with very white paws, and a white tip on his tail, and another brown rat, who had less white on him.

I named the one with white paws Socks, and the other one Sammy.

After leaving them both to settle in for twenty four hours I took Socks out to play. Socks however did not like that

idea and ran away from me. He ended up underneath my book shelf.

I had no idea how to get him out so tried putting my hand in to pull him out, he just kept jumping away from it. I tried enticing him out with all sorts of food but he just wasn't having any of it.

Two hours later he was still under the book shelf and I was worried that he would be traumatised, I put my hand under for what felt like the thousandth time and managed to get a hold of him, and pull him out. I got him back inside his cage again where he was happy.

What I find amazing is that an eight week old rat who I had never handled properly before was hiding from me for two hours and never once bit me, even though he must have been terrified.

Whilst Socks was hiding from me Sammy had discovered that there was a hammock in the cage, and had made himself at home there.

When Socks arrived back inside his cage he couldn't find his brother for ages. Eventually he succeeded in finding Sammy, and the two of them snuggled up together in the hammock.

Quite soon after I tried taking them both out in the bathroom, to stop another hiding incident from happening. I opened the cage door and very soon Sammy was peeking out. Before long Sammy had climbed out and Socks began to follow him. Soon Sammy was

running about, but he always came back to his cage if he heard a noise.

Sammy quickly learnt that he could climb up the outside of his cage and run along the top. When Socks tried to follow him he got stuck at the top. Socks really didn't know how to get down when his brother went down. Sammy must have realised this because he climbed back up and down again, trying to show Socks what to do, until Socks managed.

I took them out in the bathroom a lot after that, and their personalities soon became clear to me. Sammy was an outgoing, quite confident, but friendly rat and Socks was a shy, quiet, sweet rat. Both brothers were great friends and rarely left each others side.

They soon began to like me too, and after spending many hours with them in the bathroom I decided that I could finally trust them not to make a mess on my bed. I allowed them onto my bed for short periods of time at first, but they loved it and soon playing on my bed became a regular thing.

Socks and Sammy would chase each other around on my bed, as I watched TV or read a book.

As Christmas neared I began to plan the perfect Christmas for them. I went and bought them presents, and wrapped them. I even got a little knitted Christmas hat for them to wear. During one shopping trip I found little rat advent calendars, which they both got.

On the 27th November I created a website for them - [caitlinwalburn.wix.com/ratchat](http://caitlinwalburn.wix.com/ratchat)

I started a blog, posted pictures of them and added rat tips.

On the 1st of December I opened both rat advent calendars for them and gave them each their first chocolate treat. They both loved them!

On Christmas day I gave them each a present to open. Socks pulled the wrapping paper off of his present first. It was a stick that he could chew. Sammy soon got the wrapping paper off his too - he received a rope toy. I had also bought them a couple of packets of treats, chocolate treats since they liked them so much, and fruit treats.

As the new year swept in I noticed a huge change in their size. They had grown a lot from those eight week old baby rats, I had bought, into adults.

I also noticed that Socks seemed to be losing the guard hairs on his tail, that worried me and I soon visited the vet. The vet thought that it was probably over-grooming, but within a few weeks it looked more like my two boys were fighting.

Sammy and Socks who were so close started having wrestling matches. They always ended with Socks terrified of Sammy, and Sammy's hair standing on end. During one particularly bad fight I got bitten when I tried to end it. I have learnt that rats don't usually bite unless they are in pain, but Sammy definitely bit me.

I got very worried about the two of them, but they became friends again within a few days. I put the fighting down as hormones because neither of my boys had been neutered.

Shortly after Sammy had a seizure. He was shaking and pawing the air, as well as frothing at the mouth. At first I thought he was choking but then he started jumping round in circles. I rushed him off to the vet who gave him some diazepam, which after half an hour began to calm him down. However he continued to circle his cage all night, and Socks was scared to go near him because he was acting so strangely.

The next day I realised that Sammy had not eaten or drunk anything all night, so I got a needleless syringe and got him to drink water through that. He must have been really thirsty because he just wouldn't stop drinking. I tried to get him to eat a bit of apple and he did, but he couldn't hold it himself so I have to help him. It looked like the seizure had damaged his brain because he was experiencing bad balance and couldn't hold anything.

Sammy soon recovered and was able to do things for himself again, but his personality had changed. He seemed to be attacking Socks, at first it looked like he was just trying to groom him but Socks ended up with bite marks all over his back. Socks, sadly, was really scared of Sammy and they had to be separated.

Sammy became progressively more violent, until he was attacking me. At first it was just soft bits that I didn't really mind but soon he started biting harder, and I

received a few bleeding bites. He got even worse and started biting everything he could, including my pillow.

I had to take him to the vet again because Sammy seemed to be in a lot of pain. He was put under antithetic and examined. It turned out that he had a brain tumour pressing down on his left eye, and it was causing the slightest touch on him to be painful. Due to the small size of a rat's head, and the fact the brain must be even smaller to fit inside, the vet was unable to operate on it. I knew the kindest thing for Sammy was to have him put down. That was the hardest decision I have ever had to make, but I knew it was the right thing for him.

After it was done, I knew I had to show Socks, or he would think Sammy had just disappeared. Socks, despite everything that had happened, still loved Sammy. He spent a long time sniffing Sammy, before he began to groom him, one last time. It was heartbreaking to watch, and in the days to come it would be too.

After burying Sammy, I spent a lot of time with Socks. I made an extra effort to play with him, and to cuddle him. At first Socks seemed alright, but he began to show signs of depression. No matter how long I spent with him he seemed to always be upset.

I bought a brush for him, so I could help him clean himself, just like Sammy did. As the days went on Socks became lethargic and just wanted to lie in my arms. He stopped eating properly and I couldn't get him to eat again.

Ten days after I lost Sammy, I found Socks dead too. Socks just couldn't live without his brother, because they were the best of friends.

My first, albeit too short, experience of rats had me hooked and in May 2014, I got Miles, Sebastian and Hercules.

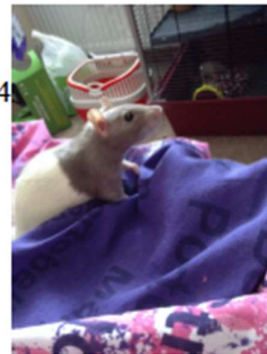
Name: Miles  
Gender: Male  
Estimated Date of Birth: 1st May 2014  
Siblings: Sebastian  
Type: Hooded black



Name: Sebastian  
Gender: Male  
Estimated Date of Birth: 1st May 2014  
Siblings: Miles  
Type: Hooded fawn albino



Name: Hercules  
Gender: Male  
Estimated Date of Birth: 28th February 2014  
Adoption Date: 3rd May 2014  
Type: Hooded grey



On the next page, I'll share some of my favourite magazine pictures of these guys.



Issue 7 saw the start of my Hercules's Diary series as well as the rats beginning their own holiday!

### Rattie Holiday

Miles, Sebastian and Hercules went off on a little holiday. They are still on it now, but here is what has happened so far!

They packed their bags, or in Miles's case a blank photo album.



They caught a plane, quite literally...



...And almost missed their flight.



The rest of their holiday will be in the September issue.

The holiday continued in the September issue...

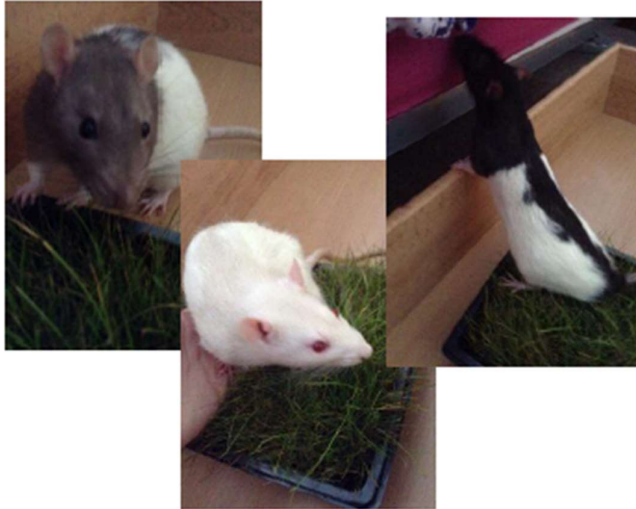
...And almost missed their flight.



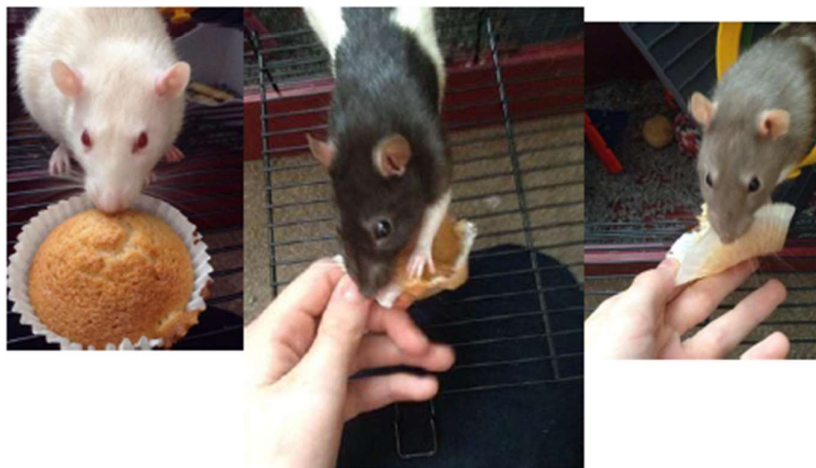
...But luckily they didn't and got to enjoy pancakes for breakfast.



They had a fun day out playing in grass...



...But were back in time for a cake!



The magazine became less frequent after this, although I did still try to release an issue fairly regularly.

Issue 19 had an article entitled 'Reasons to Love Pet Rats' which I will share below.



## Reasons to Love Pet Rats

Almost a year ago, I wrote a blog post entitled '*5 Reasons To Love Pet Rats*'. In that post I gave these five reasons to love pet rats:

- They're adorable!
- They're clean
- Intelligent!
- They didn't spread the plague
- They're loving creatures

As it's World Rat Day, I thought I would touch up these reasons – and I've also added another three reasons!

First of all, rats are adorable! I mean, look at Hercules's face!



Seriously! Who wouldn't find him cute?

Next there's the fact that rats are clean. They're cleaner than a lot of people are. They clean themselves more than cats do!



Rats are intelligent! They are capable of learning their own names, as well as a multitude of tricks.



Ask any rat owner and they'll tell you, rats actually seem to understand us!

Now let's get something straight, rats didn't spread the plague! People used to believe that the fleas on the rats were responsible for spreading the plague – not the rats, the fleas. Now, it's thought that gerbils might have been responsible for spreading the plague. Again, rats were not responsible. So, tell everyone you know – rats did not spread the plague!



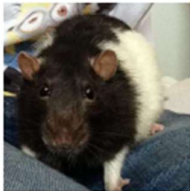
Rats are loving creatures. They are extremely sociable animals who love each other. They also love their humans.



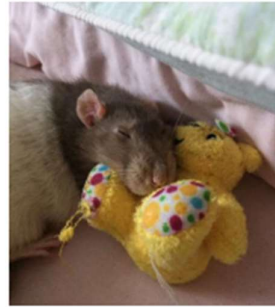
On top of those five reasons, rats are also easy to take care of. They're not the easiest pet to take care of, but they're still easier to look after than a dog or horse! Rats make great first pets for children – as long as they are supervised and there is a responsible adult willing to take care of them if the child loses interest.



Rats are playful. They love to play – with toys, with each other and with their humans! rats will find a way to make anything fun!



Perhaps the most important reason to love pet rats is that if you love them, they'll love you back. Rats respond well to human contact. If you have rats, you need to be willing to spend time with them every day. I guarantee, they'll look forward to the times when you let them out to play!



Rats are amazing! They make absolutely fantastic pets! You've just read eight reasons to love pet rats, but any rat owner knows there's about a million more!

Photo credits: Hercules, Sebastian and Miles (in that order for the first three photos).

Article written by Caitlin Walburn

Issue 20 featured an article about Miles, Sebastian and Hercules:

## My Boys

This time of year is particularly special to me. Five years ago, on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014, I adopted two little rats from a pet shop. They were tiny – much smaller than I had expected. I think they must have been younger than eight weeks old when I got them, even though I was told that was their age. One was white with black fur extending down from his head and over his shoulders, the other was an albino with the same hood as his brother but this one was fawn rather than black. I called the first Miles, and the second Sebastian. Two days later, I adopted Hercules, a lone rat, from an animal rescue. He was white with a grey hood extending down from his head and over his shoulders. I brought Hercules home and quickly began introductions.

There is a proper way to conduct introductions. What I did was not the correct way to do introductions and I don't recommend that anyone else attempts to do them in this way, but in this situation, it worked.

I started by using my bed as neutral territory for the introductions. The moment he was free, Hercules darted over to the other two. Miles and Sebastian were terrified. Although only nine weeks old, Hercules was much larger than they were. He flipped them both upside down and began to inspect them. The tiny rats didn't know how to react and simply let him. I was worried that Hercules might hurt them but he didn't. Hercules slept alone that night. He didn't do anything in his makeshift cage except sleep. He was obviously depressed and lonely. I carried out introduction again and again on the bed. Each of them went exactly the same as the first.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2014, five years ago tomorrow, I took Hercules out of the cage he was living in first. As I opened the other cage to take Miles and Sebastian out, Hercules rushed inside. I was terrified that everything was ruined. Hercules explored the cage whilst Miles and Sebastian followed. No fight broke out, everyone was happy. That was the day that my three boys started living together. They quickly grew to be the best of friends. Five years ago tomorrow, my boys – Miles, Sebastian and Hercules – were successfully introduced.



Miles and Sebastian on the day I got them



Hercules on the day I got him

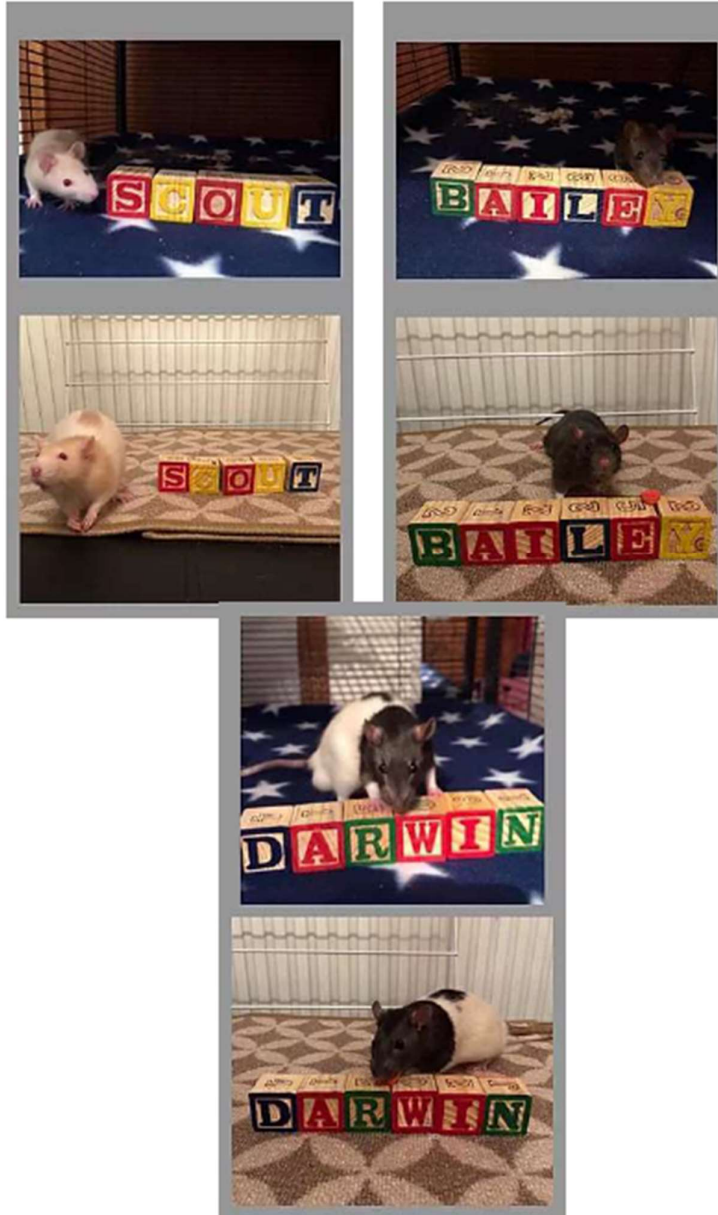


Miles, Sebastian and Hercules on the day they were successfully introduced

In April 2020, I introduced Scout, Bailey and Darwin

### Meet The New Blood

Introducing...



And the adventures began...

A few days ago... the boys got to meet a sea pancake!



Here, in Scotland, we are currently on lockdown due to COVID-19. Because of this, I have been posting an activity the boys have been doing every day.

So far, they have been to the Zoo...





Helped Dr Who to battle the Daleks...



Part 2 coming soon....