



**The Rules of the Midlands Rat Club  
2016/2017**

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## The constitution of the Midlands Rat Club

**1) Title**

The club shall be called "The Midlands Rat Club".

**2) Objectives**

- a) To promote fancy rats as pets and exhibition animals.
- b) To protect the interests of fancy rats and the rat fancy in general.
- c) To encourage good breeding practices.
- d) To maintain acceptable standards by which fancy rats should be judged.
- e) To encourage and maintain a high standard of excellence in judging and show management.
- f) To educate members to adopt high standards of rat care.
- g) To conduct the majority of its activities in the Midlands area as a regional rat club.

*As ratified at the second AGM at Birmingham, 05 April 2003.*

*GM 17/04/2003*

## The rules of the Midlands Rat Club

**1) Committee**

- a) The purpose of the committee is to conduct the day-to-day running of the Midlands Rat Club and its decision-making in a practical and expedient manner. The committee is to run the club in the spirit intended by the membership.
- b) There shall be nine annually elected committee members: club chairman, club secretary, club treasurer, general show secretary, membership secretary, publicity officer, fun events coordinator, shop and stall coordinator and rosette and trophy officer.
- c) The committee members shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting, which must be held once in each calendar year.
- d) Each committee member shall have voting rights at committee meetings. The quorum at a committee meeting shall be five committee members. A minimum of five votes is required to pass committee business.
- e) No person may occupy more than one committee post. A person can, however, hold a committee post and one or more club worker roles at the committee's discretion.
- f) No MRC committee member shall occupy a position at any other rat club or society that carries committee voting rights within that organisation.
- g) The committee may appoint suitably able volunteers to undertake tasks within the club. These club workers shall not have committee voting rights.
- h) All committee members and club workers must be fully paid up members of the club. Committee posts may only be held by members with continuous membership of at least one year.
- i) Should an existing committee position become vacant, the remaining committee members must inform the membership in the next available issue of the club journal. Prospective candidates will be invited to apply for the vacant post within fourteen days of the date of posting of the club journal. A list of candidates, together with a statement from each candidate, will then be put forward to the

membership for a postal only vote. The duly elected member will then take up the vacant post with full committee voting rights until the next Annual General Meeting.

In the event of there being only one candidate within the allotted fourteen days, the committee shall declare the candidature unopposed and the position will be filled by that candidate. In the event of there being no applicants for the vacant post, each subsequent publication of the club journal shall carry an invitation for applications for the vacancy.

In the intervening period, if necessary, the committee may reshuffle and/or co-opt a member of the club to carry out any duties of any vacant positions in order to ensure the smooth running of the club. Those remaining on the committee in a different position shall retain their committee voting rights. A co-opted member will fulfil the duties of the committee role but will not have full voting rights.

- j) If the committee fails to co-opt, or the membership fails to elect, a quorum committee (resulting in the inability of the committee to vote on club matters and therefore unable to act democratically) then an EGM will be called by the remaining committee members. Should the committee still be without quorum after the EGM, the remaining committee members should dissolve the club in line with Rule 8.
- k) The chairman, club secretary or a majority of the committee members may call a committee meeting when necessary.
- l) If the club chairman is not present, the committee members shall elect another committee member to undertake the job of chairing the meeting.
- m) The club secretary shall be responsible for keeping minutes of the committee meetings and reporting all committee decisions to the membership. If the club secretary is not present at a committee meeting, another committee member shall undertake this task. Any member may request to receive copies of the minutes by post, providing that a suitable stamped addressed envelope is enclosed upon application. The committee minutes are the intellectual property of the club and may not be used without permission.
- n) Non-committee members may be permitted to attend a committee meeting by invitation only. Committee meetings shall be confidential, and reporting of discussions held within the meetings shall be limited to the minutes as described in 1(m).
- o) Minor business of the committee may be conducted by post, telephone, email or private internet forum and the club secretary shall record the voting. Each committee member must be contacted and given at least five days to reply.
- p) All committee business, by whatever means it is conducted, is confidential and all elected members of the committee will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement kept by the club secretary. Unauthorised disclosure of committee business by a committee member, by any means other than by the minutes as described in 1(m), by announcements in Rat-A-2-E or via the MRC forum may be considered in breach of this agreement. A committee member found in breach of the confidentiality agreement may be removed from office by a majority committee vote and their post advertised as vacant as per committee rule 1(i).
- q) Committee members who fail to fulfil their role in the committee and/or to attend a reasonable proportion of meetings and shows may be removed from office by a majority committee vote and their post advertised as vacant as per committee rule 1(i).

## **2) Membership**

- a) There are the following grades of membership:
- Adult (16+)
  - Family
  - Junior (15 and under) [note rule 2(j)]
  - Senior (a person in receipt of a state pension)
  - Educational (school, college or university or similar organisation)
  - Non-EU (any person residing in a non-EU state)
- b) Applications for membership are subject to the discretion of the committee. The application - with membership fee - must be sent to the membership secretary who can accept the membership (subject to ratification by the committee) or bring the matter to the attention of the committee.
- c) In exceptional circumstances, the committee reserves the right to refuse to ratify the membership secretary's decision, in which case the fee will be returned to the applicant. There is no right of appeal.
- d) Payment of the membership fee is deemed to mean that the member agrees to be bound by the club's constitution and rules.
- e) The membership shall run for twelve months from the date of joining or renewing, in accordance with the rates set at the latest Annual General Meeting. Payment must be made in sterling.
- f) Members who have allowed their membership to lapse may rejoin the club without incurring the joining fee.
- g) An Annual General Meeting can award life membership for services rendered to the club.
- h) One vote will be allocated to each membership. Exceptions to this rule are detailed in 2(i) and 2(j).
- i) A maximum of two members of a 'Family Membership' are eligible to vote provided that they have been named in the membership as participating members.
- j) A 'Junior Membership' or a junior member of a 'Family Membership' is not eligible to vote (a junior is defined as a person under sixteen years of age).
- k) Each 'Educational Membership' will have a named representative and contact point. The educational membership will operate in the same manner as a family membership with one voting member.
- l) The committee will keep a register of the names and addresses of current members. Names (without details) may be kept indefinitely for archive and operational purposes. No details whatsoever will be passed to a third party.

## **3) AGM/EGM Rules and Procedure**

- a) Amendments to the rules, including additions and deletions, must be passed at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).
- b) The committee is permitted to adjust rule numbers and letters as appropriate following any changes passed at the AGM. Minor grammatical errors may be corrected on the strict understanding that the meaning of the rule is not changed in any way.
- c) Changes to the constitution must be passed at an EGM.
- d) Any proposal to be put before an AGM must be proposed, seconded and received

- by the club secretary at least twenty-eight days before the date of the AGM.
- e) The club secretary must circulate details of the proposals at least twenty-one days before the date of the AGM.
  - f) If an EGM is called, the club secretary will circulate copies of the petition and information regarding the date and venue of the EGM at least fourteen days before the date of the EGM. Where possible, the EGM will be held after an MRC show.
  - g) At an AGM or EGM each membership is entitled to vote by post, the exceptions being detailed in 2(i) and 2(j). The club secretary must receive the postal votes at least seven days before the date of the AGM or EGM. The date on the postmark will determine the validity of these votes.
  - h) At an AGM or EGM sixteen voting members present or at least one twentieth of the club's total voting membership (whichever is the greater) must be present to constitute a quorum.
  - i) A member who cannot attend an AGM or EGM may have his or her views read out by the club chairman or other committee member provided that those views are received at least seven days before the meeting. Late comments and submissions may be included in the AGM/EGM agenda wherever possible, but their inclusion cannot be guaranteed.
  - j) There is no provision for voting by proxy, telephone or email.
  - k) Any proposed change to the constitution must be raised by two-thirds of the committee or a petition signed by at least fifteen members (excluding junior members) and sent to the club secretary.
  - l) When voting to change the constitution a majority of all members with voting rights must be in favour of the change to pass it. In the event of a tie the club chairman shall have the casting vote.
  - m) To amend the rules an EGM may be called by two-thirds of the committee or a petition signed by at least fifteen members (excluding junior members) and sent to the club secretary. The petition must state the amendment(s) proposed.
  - n) When voting to amend the rules - or voting on a proposal (that does not involve amendments) - at an AGM or EGM, a majority of the total number of voters must vote in favour of the amendment(s) or proposal(s) to pass it/them. In the event of a tie, the club chairman shall have a casting vote.
  - o) Minor changes to the wording of proposals can be made at an AGM with the approval of at least 80% of the voting members present.

#### **4) Warnings, Suspension and Expulsion**

- a) The committee can issue a written warning, if a majority of the committee feel it is justified, as a result of any complaint or concern raised by a member or a member of the committee. A written warning will only be issued after discussion with all parties concerned. Two warnings within any 12 months membership could constitute a suspension or expulsion depending on the severity of the incident(s).
- b) The committee can warn or temporarily suspend a member, pending investigation, after receiving a written complaint from a committee member or any other member of the club, accompanied by a £5 deposit – for which a receipt will be given which is forfeited if the complaint is not upheld. In the event of the complaint being upheld the maximum penalty is expulsion.
- c) In the case of a complaint, as detailed in rule 4(b), the committee will consider the matter at the next committee meeting. Fourteen days notice of such a meeting will

be given to the parties concerned, together with a written copy of the complaint. The parties concerned have the right to appear in person or to send a written defence.

- d) Should a complaint be made against a committee member, his or her participation in the discussion of the complaint is restricted to that entitled to a club member. The committee member in question may not take part in any discussion of or the vote concerning his or her warning, suspension, expulsion or other disciplinary action.
- e) If the committee decides that it is warranted, it may suspend or expel a member, under the requirements of rules 4(a) and 4(b), by a two-thirds majority vote of the entire committee.
- f) In instances where the actions or statements of a member are contrary to the aims and constitution of the MRC, membership may be ended or renewal may be refused at the discretion of the committee, following a two-thirds majority vote of the entire committee.
- g) If either rule 4(e) or 4(f) are enforced the member concerned has the right to appeal to a postal referendum, and must notify the club secretary of such a decision within seven days of the committee meeting.
- h) The member will be given seven days to write a letter, if the member so wishes, which will be sent out to the membership by the club secretary, along with a copy of the complaint. The club secretary will inform the membership of the reasons for the postal referendum. The committee will set a date by which all votes have to be received and this date must allow the membership at least two weeks to respond. The date of the postmark will determine the validity of these votes.
- i) A two-thirds majority of the votes received is required to suspend or expel the member.

#### **5) Accounts**

- a) The club treasurer shall be responsible for the funds of the club and shall have responsibility for a bank account for all monies received and paid on behalf of the club.
- b) Signatories on the club bank account must be two unrelated committee members who do not live in the same household. This will be the treasurer plus one other.
- c) The club treasurer will present an audited statement of the club's incomes and expenditures to the AGM.
- d) The auditor shall be elected by the committee and shall not be a member of the committee.
- e) Normally, all claims for reimbursement must be made within three months of the date that the costs were incurred and must be accompanied by a receipt unless otherwise verifiable.

#### **6) Shows**

- a) The committee must approve judges. A judge who is not approved may not judge varieties classes at a Midlands Rat Club show.
- b) The committee shall be responsible for arranging sitting-in appointments, and other methods of training judges.

#### **7) Publicity**

- a) Committee members may not use their titles and/or positions to falsely represent the club to the membership, general public, or any form of the media by presenting

personally held views or opinions as those of the club.

**8) Dissolution**

- a) The Midlands Rat Club may, at any time, be dissolved by a resolution proposed by at least two-thirds of the committee or twenty-five members (excluding junior members). To apply, the resolution must be passed by a majority of all members with voting rights. Upon dissolution all debts and liabilities must be satisfied. Such a resolution may give instructions for the disposal of any assets and any remaining assets may be given or transferred to an organisation or organisations decided by the Membership.
- b) In the event of the dissolution of the Club, every effort should be made to return each donated trophy to its original donor, subject to the wishes of the donor.

## Show Rules

**A) Sections**

- 1) There are three judging sections, not all of which need be at each show. The sections are:
  - Varieties (judged according to variety standards).
  - Pets (judged on condition, health and friendliness).
  - Small Furrries (non-rats; judged on condition, health and friendliness).
- 2) Small Furrries (non-rats) shall mean small animals usually associated with being a child's pet. The general show secretary will maintain a list of acceptable species which will be displayed on the MRC website. Canines, felines, mustelids, birds, reptiles and invertebrates are to be explicitly excluded. If you have a pet not on the list please consult the general show secretary before bringing it to a show. It is the exhibitor's responsibility to ensure that all animals are shown in a container proven as suitable for their species. An adequate moisture source must also be available during the show. It is the exhibitor's responsibility to ensure that their entries are of good temperament and that it is safe (for both the animal and the judge) for the animal to be handled. Where a particular species may be regarded as being unsafe to handle then a visual critique will be considered. In such a case the show secretary must be notified when placing the entry prior to the show.
- 3) Each section is distinct and no animal may be shown in more than one section at a show.
- 4) Animals in different sections may not share a show tank.

**B) Entries**

- 1) The show organiser is entitled to request the name of the rat's breeder when the rat is entered.
- 2) The show organiser reserves the right not to accept late or incomplete entries.
- 3) All animals may be given a health check by a suitably knowledgeable person



appointed by the show organiser at any point before or during the show. Any problems that could risk the health of other animals are to be promptly reported to the show organiser for further action. The show organiser has the right to refuse entry of any animal into the show hall.

- 4) Rats must be shown in a humane transparent plastic tank. The minimum tank size is to be eleven litres and the maximum tank size to be fourteen litres. A list of MRC-approved tanks is available from the general show secretary or show organiser on request. This applies to all rats in both variety and pet classes.
- 5) Show tanks shall be structurally safe and in hygienic condition. With the exception of MRC hire tanks, all marks of ownership on show tanks must be small, discreet and appear only on the underside. Marks of ownership on the mesh or lids of show tanks is not permitted. The show organiser reserves the right to refuse the use of unsuitable show tanks at MRC shows for any reason.
- 6) All rats entered into the show must have a suitable substrate in their show tanks to an adequate depth not exceeding a maximum depth of two inches (50mm). A list of MRC-approved substrates is available from the general show secretary or show organiser on request.
- 7) All rats entered into the show must have a moisture source provided for them for the duration of the show. This shall take the form of a small piece of apple or carrot (or other suitable fruit or vegetable at the discretion of the general show secretary). A small amount of dried food may also be placed in the tank, but no food bowls are permitted. Water bottles must be removed from the show tanks prior to the commencement of judging unless specifically authorised by the show organiser if or when circumstances dictate.
- 8) Adult rats may not share a show tank in any section of the show. Two kittens may share a tank in one section of the show if they are of the same sex and clearly distinguishable varieties. It is permissible for the second kitten to be solely a companion for the first kitten.
- 9) Pregnant rats may not be shown. While recently mated does may be returned at show venues, heavily pregnant does are not allowed at the show or its environs.
- 10) Varieties that the committee considers to be undesirable because of health or breeding implications are not allowed at the show or its environs. A list of these varieties is available from the general show secretary on request.
- 11) To be eligible for the kitten class an animal must be under the age of fourteen weeks and over the age of eight weeks. Kittens under the age of six weeks are not allowed at the show or its environs.
- 12) Members of the same family or household as the judge are not permitted to show animals in a section that the judge is judging.
- 13) An entry fee for each animal will be paid in accordance with the most recent rate set by the Committee.
- 14) As an introduction to our club, non-members may show twice before joining the club. Anyone whose membership has expired will not be permitted to exhibit their rats without first renewing their membership in full on or before the day of the show.

### **C) Judges**

- 1) Pet judges and small furies judges are arranged at the discretion of the general

show secretary. Varieties judges are arranged at the discretion of the MRC committee from the judging panel, which consists of approved judges who have accepted their invitation to join the judging panel.

- 2) Judges must judge all the classes within their section without prejudice.
- 3) The judge's decision in relation to the disqualification and placing of exhibits is final and cannot be altered.
- 4) Animals disqualified by the judge on grounds of ill-health should be passed to the show organiser. The show organiser may request that the animal to be taken from the show venue. In less severe cases where there is no immediate risk to the rat's health but is unsuitable to be shown, the show organiser may let the owner place the rat in a designated 'safe area' for the duration of the show at the owner's risk.
- 5) If it can be shown that a judge's conduct in any animal-related organisation is not compatible with acceptable standards he/she will be removed from the judging panel.
- 6) All judges are to be provided with free refreshments during the show and a gift (suggested guideline of £10 per judge) to express the club's thanks.
- 7) Varieties judges are to be granted full reasonable travel expenses up to a maximum value of £40, which may be increased in exceptional cases, at the discretion of the MRC committee.

#### **D) Show Personnel**

- 1) Each show must have a designated show organiser (a club worker post) who will undertake the organisation of the show both prior to the day of the show and on the day itself.
- 2) The show organiser will take entries for the show and details of those rats to be sold, offered for sale, exchanged or given away at the show. The show organiser will also arrange stewards for each judge. The show organiser will also arrange for kitchen staff, if required, and will find others to undertake certain tasks if necessary.
- 3) The show organiser must not delegate any of the key responsibilities defined in rules D1 and D2 without the prior consent of the general show secretary.
- 4) The appointment of show organiser is the responsibility of the general show secretary.
- 5) The following personnel will be issued with one meal voucher and 5 drinks vouchers for use on the show day: judges, stewards and scribes. Kitchen helpers will be entitled to one free drink during their kitchen shift.

#### **E) Exchanging livestock**

- 1) No rats or non-rats (as outlined in A(2)) can be sold at shows.
- 2) All rats changing hands (pre-sold, exchanged or given away) at the show must be declared to the exchange coordinator before the close of entries. Late exchanges are at the discretion of the exchange coordinator.
- 3) All rats changing hands will be given a health check at an appropriate time by a suitably knowledgeable person appointed by the exchange coordinator.
- 4) One person involved with the exchange must be an MRC member and they are responsible for ensuring MRC exchange rules are met. Non-members (e.g. for

rescue situations) may only exchange at the discretion of the committee.

- 5) A minimum of name, address and the rat's date of birth (or an approximation for rescued rats) must be provided in any exchange, as information for all parties concerned.
- 6) Rats meeting the criteria in rules E(1), E(2), E(3), E(4) will be issued a certificate. Rats may not exchange hands until certificates are issued and judging has started.
- 7) Non-rats, as outlined in A2, may not be brought to the show and offered for sale, but private exchange arrangements are permissible subject to similar kinds of pre-notification and health checks as above.
- 8) The exchange coordinator and/or health checker may refuse entry to the show venue of any exchange animals which are considered to be ailing. In cases where there is no immediate risk to the animal's health but it is generally considered unwise to exchange, the exchange coordinator may let the owner place the animal in a designated 'safe area' for the duration of the show, at the owner's risk.

#### **F) Awards**

- 1) Awards are made at the discretion of the judge. A judge may withhold any award, and there is no obligation to make a token award if the rat is not of standard.
- 2) An annual award (for example, a trophy) may only be awarded to a fully paid-up member of the club, who may keep the award for a specified period of time following its presentation. If the winner of such an award is a non-member then the award will be retained by the club until it is next competed for. Should any award holder in the intervening time cease to be a member, then the award must be returned to the club at or before the time their membership expires. It is the responsibility of the award holder to return any awards to the club in good condition at or before the next time the award is due to be competed for. Should the award not be returned at the appropriate time or the award is not returned in reasonable condition then that award holder may forfeit the right to take away awards in the future. The MRC also reserves the right to recover its property by any legal means necessary and reserves the right to recover the cost of doing so. Upon receiving such an award, the recipient will sign a declaration to say that they have understood these conditions. The presentation of rosettes and/or trophies will take place as soon as possible after the conclusion of the judging in all sections.
- 3) The club welcomes sponsorship of trophies and rosettes. All trophies and rosettes donated by members must first be approved by the committee to ensure that they are in keeping with existing standards.

#### **G) MRC Quality Breeders Award**

##### **Objectives**

To recognise and approve breeders who consistently achieve a prescribed level of excellence as described in the articles below.

##### **Eligibility**

- To be a fully paid-up member of the MRC.
- To be breeding your second generation of rats.
- To conform to the definition of a 'rattery' as described below.
- To agree to the code of ethics as described below.

**Definition of a rattery**

- A rattery is defined as a group of domesticated rats kept at one location.
- Usually a rattery is to be in one location. More than one rattery at any given location may be allowed subject to approval by the committee.
- A rattery where the different sexes are kept at different locations and where the rattery is run as a joint enterprise is permitted.
- Combining two or more ratteries to operate under one name is not permitted.
- The owner of a rattery is responsible for providing a unique rattery name which must be approved by the MRC

**Code of ethics**

- Other than medical necessity, the rattery is to be maintained in spirit and in fact as a no-cull rattery.
- To provide appropriately sized housing with room for rats to climb and space for natural behaviour.
- To provide appropriate substrate and diet.
- To keep adequate records concerning your rats lineage and health.
- To provide adequate veterinary care when necessary.
- To observe good breeding practices as outlined below.

**Good Breeding Practices**

- To aim to breed strong, healthy, resilient rats from parents with a proven health history.
- To aim to breed rats of good temperament, suitable as a child's pet.
- Not to purposely breed varieties listed as 'undesirable' by the MRC.

**The Points**

- Points of equal merit are awarded in the supreme challenges for both pet and variety classes.
- 1st place = 4 points
- 2nd place = 3 points
- 3rd place = 2 points
- 4th place = 1 point
- 1 point will be given to BOA if it falls outside of 4th place.
- In the Variety Class, 1 point will be given to the winner of the Stud Buck Challenge and will be additional to any points accrued in the Supreme Challenge.

**The Award**

- To achieve the MRC Quality Breeders Award, a rattery must have accrued 25 points, where at least 5 points have been gained in both the Variety and Pet classes.
- To agree to an inspection of the conditions of your rattery by a mutually acceptable peer.
- Having met with the above criteria, recipients of the award will be announced in the first available edition of Rat-A-2-E following their success. A permanent trophy will be awarded at the AGM following their success.
- An annual maintenance level of 8 points (in either the Pets or Variety classes) must be achieved to retain the award. In exceptional circumstances, the committee may temporarily exempt MRCQB's from this obligation.
- Recipients of the award will be issued annually with a logo to display on their websites. This must only be used for the duration of their eligibility as a MRCQB. The MRC retains the right to the copyright of this logo and will take whatever action necessary to prevent its unauthorised use.

**H) General**

- 1) Smoking is prohibited at the show; smoking is only permitted outside subject to the venue's rules.
- 2) Any person deemed by the show organiser to be behaving inappropriately may be asked to leave. He or she may later be subject to disciplinary action.
- 3) Complaints are to be made in writing to the club secretary and accompanied by a £5 deposit, which is forfeit if the complaint is not upheld.
- 4) The committee shall arbitrate in any show-related matter, which it deems eligible as a complaint, subject to rule C3.
- 5) No dogs are allowed at club shows, with the exception of assistance dogs.
- 6) Traders and stallholders wishing to sell merchandise at club shows will be required to pay a fee set by the committee. All merchandise sold at club shows must be sold from a trade stand (table) allocated by the shop and stalls coordinator. Trade and stallholder stands must be booked with the shop and stalls coordinator by close of entries. A copy of the terms and conditions set by the committee is available on request.

*As ratified at the fifteenth AGM at Sawley, 2 April 2016*

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