

## The following signs indicate illness:

- Poor eater or non-eater
- Labored breathing
- Dirty tail
- Abnormal urine output
- Hunched or arched back
- Dirty or rough hair coat
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Lumps, bumps
- Eye, ear or nose discharge
- Walking stiffly

## Mice Data

Adult Weight	1 ounce
Life span	24-36 mo.
Sexual maturity	6-7 weeks
Gestation	19-21 days
Liter size	10-12
Litters per year	6-10
Diet	19-24% protein 4-6% fat 3-6% fiber

## Rat Data

Adult Weight	10 1/2 ounces female 14 ounces male
Life span	24-36 months
Sexual maturity	2-4 months
Gestation	21-23 days
Liter size	16-12
Litters per year	7-10
Diet	16-20% protein 4% fat 18% fiber

Mice & Rat Care Pamphlet Provided by PIJAC  
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## MICE & RAT CARE BASICS

Mice and rats have been kept as pets for many years and are often one of the first pets of young children. They are clean and quiet, and most are easily trained developing into excellent little pets. They are easy to care for and normally healthy during their lifetime.

### Housing

Mice or rats must be housed in an escape proof enclosure, either an aquarium with a lock-on screen cover or a cage with closely spaced bars to prevent the animals from escaping. Specially designed wire or plastic cages or an aquarium are the most common housing. The enclosure should be large enough to provide space for eating, sleeping and sufficient exercise. The flooring should be solid and the side walls should be at least 5" to 7" high for mice and 8" to 24" for rats. You should try to acquire the largest cage you can afford so as to offer the optimum environment.

Males and females should be maintained in separate colonies to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Do not mix new arrivals with established colonies to avoid the possibility of fighting.

Remove newborns, “pinkies,” from a colony to avoid cannibalism. And always avoid overcrowding.

## Environment

Maintaining a temperature that is comfortable for humans is comfortable for mice and rats. The best room temperature ranges between 70 F and 75 F. You should avoid temperature fluctuations and the ambient temperature should range between 65 and 85 F.

Additional enrichment devices such as hiding tunnel tubes, exercise wheels, shelves, ramps, climbing items, and hanging and rolling toys designed for rodents should be included. Privacy should be provided by including a hide or rest box.

Both Mice and Rats play, forage and feed in the evening because they are nocturnal. It is important that you provide your pets with approximately 12 hours of light everyday.

Bedding is very important in providing an appropriate comfortable and hygienic environment. Most of the commercially available bedding materials (wood shavings, corn cob or paper based materials) are ideal for this purpose as long as it is absorbent, clean, dust free, and non-toxic. Frequent changing is advised to prevent odor and the accumulation of ammonia fumes. Do not use cedar shavings or chips because the cedar oil can be harmful to your pet.

## Feeding and Watering

Laboratory feeding blocks, specifically formulated for rodents in addition to commercial seed and grain mixtures are a perfect staple diet. This daily diet should be supplemented with various commercially prepared seed and grain based treats, sticks and snacks along with an occasional portion of fresh fruits and green leafy vegetables. Do not change diets suddenly.

Fresh water should be provided daily. Ceramic or hard plastic food bowls and ball tipped sipper bottles are recommended. Sipper bottles are often preferred because they can avoid water spillage or water contamination from your pets feces.

All bowls, dishes and bottles should be cleaned daily and disinfected weekly.

## Handling

Handling of your pet is a very important part of pet ownership. Once proper handling is accomplished, taming and enjoying many wonderful experiences are sure to follow. There are a few basic procedures to follow in order to avoid any inadvertent injuries.

**MICE:** Mice may be picked up by their tail BUT you should also provide some support to their body by placing your other hand under their feet so they may hang on for support. When picking up by the tail, you must grasp the tail close to the base. If your mouse starts to struggle and spin, it is best to immediately place him back into his enclosure. This will prevent the skin from stripping off of the tail. You may also pick him up by grasping the skin at the nape of the neck with thumb and forefinger while holding the base of the tail. If you find your mouse not receptive to being handled, you may want to first allow him to walk into a container such as a can, plastic tube or hiding place. Then gently lift it out of the enclosure and coax him out with a treat.

**RATS:** Rats, because they are heavier than mice, need to be handled by holding your thumb and forefinger behind their jaw and your other fingers around its chest to provide the needed support. When lifting by the tail, always lift at the base of the tail and provide support with your other hand.

Part of the handling process is grooming and examining your pet regularly. There are several brushes, nail trimmers, etc. available for this purpose. Gentle handling is very important and you should never forget that all rodents can bite if they are not handled properly.

Observe the condition of each animal daily. Any deviation from a normal pattern may be an early warning indicating a health condition that requires attention.