Caring for your Rat

**Life Span**  
2-3 years

**Diet**  
Rats are omnivores. The bulk of the diet should consist of a rodent block or a pellet containing a minimum of 16% crude protein and 4-5% fat. Seed-based diets promote obesity and should be avoided. Longevity is increased by feeding a low fat, vegetable protein-based diet.

**Housing**  
- A wire cage with solid flooring works well. A large, multi-level cage designed for ferrets can also make a great rat home.
- Rats are social creatures, although females are more likely to fight with each other.
- Rats are primarily nocturnal, but they will have cycles of activity during the day and night. Avoid bright lighting with albino rats.
- Adult brown rats tolerate cold temperatures well when allowed to acclimate to them.
- Provide rats with items and materials for burrowing, climbing, and chewing.

**Restraint**  
Rats are generally docile and are easy to handle. For manual restraint, grasp the rat over the back and place a thumb in the axilla (underarm) pushing a foreleg up towards the chin.

**Healthcare**  
- A rat’s front teeth grow continuously, so they need objects on which to chew in order to keep them at a normal length.
- Call your veterinarian if you notice any of the following: sneezing, lethargy, weight loss, dull eyes, diarrhea or difficulty breathing.
- A red material called porphyrin can be seen in the nostrils of most rats. It is a completely normal substance!