

## New Small Pet: Is a Rodent Right for You?

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*



the  
benefits  
of owning  
these

## PLAYFUL PETS

Although cats and dogs may be the first animals that come to mind when considering a pet, mice and rats are great alternatives to more "conventional" pets. As our lifestyles become more active and more people are living in urban areas, cats or dogs may not be a realistic choice. Our busy schedules may not allow the time and energy needed to properly care for "higher" maintenance pets.

Pet mice and rats are small and require less maintenance than cats or dogs. They are less expensive and the upkeep (cost of equipment, feeding, health care, etc.) is considerably less. Unlike dogs, nuisance barking and other noise issues are not a problem. Pet mice and rats are quiet, inexpensive to keep, undemanding, take up little space, and are easy to care for.

### **But do they make good pets?**

Pet mice and rats are very playful, social, and intelligent animals that make excellent pets for older children and adults. These pocket pets are just as cuddly and friendly as cats or dogs and offer the same bond and companionship. Pet rats are as, or more, intelligent than dogs and their curious, problem-solving nature is a testament to this fact. Pet rats learn to respond to their name and can be trained to come when called. They are one of the most intelligent and trainable small pets.

The greatest hurdle mice and rats need to overcome is the negative connotation associated with them. Pet mice and rats are stigmatized and often associated with disease. Contrary to common belief, pet mice and rats are quite fastidious and regularly clean and groom themselves like cats. Unlike cats or dogs, they do not require vaccination.

Pet mice and rats are domesticated and have gone through selective breeding similar to domesticated cats and dogs. In fact, there are numerous color and coat variations and the term "fancy" has been applied to these specific varieties. Fancy mice and rats can be compared to purebred cats and dogs and conform to written standards established by mice and rat clubs and associations. These fancy mice

and rats are quite attractive and come in exotic colors, markings, and coats such as Blue, Silver, Cinnamon, Siamese, and even Hairless.

**Low maintenance does not mean no maintenance**

As with any pet, never purchase a mouse or rat on a whim or if you're uncertain you'll be able to devote the time and financial effort needed for proper care and attention. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how attached you'll become to these clever, playful little pets.