RATS
Rats are naturally social animals that should be kept in single sex pairs or small groups to avoid breeding.

GENERAL INFORMATION
- The average life expectancy of a rat is 2-3.5 years.
- Rats can be active throughout the day and night. They will often adapt so that they are most active when you are around, as they enjoy company.
- Rats are highly agile and active and should be given a cage that allows for plenty of climbing and exploring.
- Rats should be picked up by using one hand to grasp them under their front legs and around their shoulders and a second hand to support their bottom. Picking them up solely by the tail is not advised.
- As long as they are socialised from a young age, rats are very friendly. They will, however, bite if scared.

HEALTHCARE
Rodents are a prey species and will often not show any obvious signs of disease. Should you notice any change in behaviour, weight or appearance of your pet do contact us at Elands for an appointment.

Rodents hide disease very well so often small changes are significant.

Care of Hamsters, Mice, Gerbils and Rats

St John's Church, London Road,
Dunton Green, Sevenoaks, Kent.
TN13 2TE
email: vets@elandsvet.co.uk
Tel: (01732) 452333
Fax: (01732) 741614
Branch: 1 High Street, Kemsing,
Sevenoaks, Kent. TN15 6NB
Tel: (01732) 761650
http://www.elandsvet.co.uk
Consultations by appointment
open: 8.30am to 6.30pm Mon-Fri
8.30am to 1.00pm Sat
Emergencies 24Hrs phone: (01732) 452333
Just off junction 5 of the M25
Hamsters, mice, gerbils and rats are all members of the rodent family. Although in some ways they can be very similar, there are some key differences.

**GETTING YOUR PET HOME**
- Ensure you have everything prepared for your new pet before bringing him home.
- Let your pet get to know you slowly, as he may not immediately be comfortable with being handled and picked up but will get used to it if you are patient.
- Bring your pet to Elands for a free health check with a qualified nurse once he has settled into his new home (after 5-7 days).

**HOUSING**
- Invest in the largest cage that you can, to allow your pet space to exercise and explore.
- Provide a variety of items to enrich the environment, such as climbing ropes or sticks and boxes to nest in.
- All cages should be spot-checked daily and fully cleaned out with a pet-safe cleaner once weekly.
- Only use bedding materials (such as woodshavings) that have been designed for small mammals.

**FEEDING**
- There are specific complete diets for each species. Make sure to feed the correct one for your pet. If available, pelleted food is preferable over a museli mix, as it will prevent selective feeding.
- In all cases, you can regularly supplement with fresh vegetables and fruit.
- Gerbils should also be offered mixed seed, excluding sunflower seeds as these are too fatty to be part of the regular diet.
- Be careful not to overfeed your pet, as rodents can be prone to obesity.

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**HAMSTERS**
Hamsters are not naturally social animals and should not be housed together. They are fine to live alone as long as they have an interesting environment and regular contact with you.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**
- The average life expectancy of a hamster is 1.5-2 years.
- Hamsters are naturally nocturnal. This means that they will be most active during the evening and night time.
- A healthy hamster can run up to 10km on a wheel in just one night!
- Hamsters need to be kept in a relatively stable environment as they will get stressed if they become overheated.
- In the wild they live in tundra-like places and will go into a state of hibernation when it gets too cold.
- Hamsters should be picked up by encouraging them gently to walk onto your hand. They will bite if scared!
- Male hamsters have a brown spot on either side of their body. These are scent glands which can become more obvious at certain times of year.

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**GERBILS**
Gerbils live in mixed sex groups in the wild. Unless you intend to breed, we advise against this. Male gerbils can be kept in pairs, female gerbils are best housed alone.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**
- The average life expectancy of a gerbil is 2-3 years.
- Gerbils are naturally more active in the mornings and evenings.
- Gerbils enjoy burrowing and will benefit from living in an environment that allows them to do this.
- Gerbils should be kept at about room temperature, as they are naturally desert-dwelling animals.
- Gerbils should NEVER be picked up by their tail, as the skin of this area is prone to sloughing off, resulting in severe injury.
- Gerbils have a scent gland on their tummy which can become more prominent at certain times of year.

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**MICE**
Mice are naturally social animals and can be kept in small groups. Unless you wish to breed from your mice, care should be taken that the groups are single sex.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**
- The average life expectancy of a mouse is 1-2 years.
- Mice are generally more active at night time, although they will also become active during the day if interacted with.
- Mice are very agile animals and will enjoy a multi-level cage that allows for plenty of climbing.
- Mice can be picked up by encouraging them onto your hand. They will bite if scared.