C I T Y   O F   I R V I N E
ANIMAL CARE CENTER

RAT CARE GUIDE:
SAFE HANDLING AND GROOMING

SAFE HANDLING

Through the Bars: Never feed your rat or stick your fingers through the cage bars. Doing so encourages pets to bite at fingers both in and out of the cage. Offer treats from your hand with an open palm.

TRUST

It is ideal to let your rats come to you before reaching in to pick them up as this develops trust. Talk to your rat and let it sniff your hand to announce that you are there before you pick it up. Rats do not have strong eyesight and this will help prevent startling them.
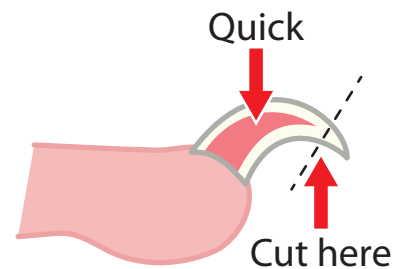
Picking Up Your Rat: Always use two hands when picking up your rat; one hand to support the rump while the other supports the chest. Once your rat is comfortable being picked up and handled, you can let it run around you. Many rats enjoy riding on shoulders and can be trained to stay there. **Do not pick your rat up by the tail; this is very dangerous for the rat.**

GROOMING

Dental Care: You do not need to brush your rat's teeth, however it is important to provide plenty of chew toys so your rat can wear down its teeth naturally. Check your rat's teeth regularly to be sure they are not overgrown or misaligned.

Bathing: Rats are fastidiously clean animals and spend up to 30% of their time grooming themselves. If you do have to bathe your rat, make sure you use a gentle shampoo such as kitten shampoo.

Nails: Rats do not need their nails trimmed and will wear down their claws naturally, especially if you provide your pet with a Lava Ledge or something similar. As rats age, they sometimes get a bit lazy and allow their nails to grow so you may need to step in and help them out then.

Quick

Cut here

If your rat does need its nails trimmed, be sure to only clip the clear part of the nail, avoiding the pink vein (quick). Use human nail clippers and try to cover up the toe with your fingers so that only the nail is exposed. If you accidentally cut the quick, dip your rat's foot in cornflour or styptic powder.

Nail trims can be scary for a rat, be sure to give breaks and lots of treats!

Information courtesy of Minnesota Pocket Pet Rescue